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KENNETH PERKINS • R.G. EMERY • NARD JONES

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MISS DEMARE MAY DICTATE HER STATEMENT NOW..AND CATCH THE NEXT TRAIN
MEANWHILE, SIR, I'D LIKE TO DROP THIS DISGUISE AND CLEAN UP
A RAZOR! SURE! I'M TAKING HER TO THE TRAIN..SHE'S A PIP
WHAT A QUICK, SMOOTH SHAVE. YOU'VE GOT A MIGHTY KEEN BLADE HERE!
IT'S A THIN GILLETTE AND I'VE USED IT PLENTY TOO!
YOU WON'T FORGET THE GRAND JURY HEARING NEXT WEEK?
WILL YOU MEET MY TRAIN?
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Vol. 115, No. 6 for October, 1946 Best of New Stories

THE NOVELETTE

The Scorpion Scar..... SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL 34

Lew Davies, disguised as Koropok the Ainu, had courted death under the very eyes of the Nips all through the war. Now, as an AMG major, big brass had elected him to shepherd a delegation of stuffed shirts from Stateside on an official snoop into the problem of GI-geisha fraternization. A hell of an assignment! But at the first stop on his reluctant tour of Tokyo's Yoshiwara—at the notorious house of Suriga—Davies tripped over the fragile threads of a web of terror that stretched all the way north to Hokkaido. And from that moment, members of the sinister society branded with the scorpion scar were marked for the vengeance of Koropok.

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The Bore From Within..... NARD JONES 68

"Well, George," says old J. F. Huntley of the Huntley Stop-Nut & Spiral Nail Company, "you are all matured now after your sojourn in the Army and I am going to place you on the sales force. Who knows but what you may one day become *sales manager!*" Which listened very good indeed to little Georgie, especially with J. F.'s blond secretary giving with those big blue eyes. But that was before I attended that Party meeting with Jakey Burrows and learned I was just a "tool of the capitalists." So I sat down to do a little thinking of my own—which ain't easy after four years in the Infantry!

Jim Sahib and the Magic Horns..... KENNETH PERKINS 76

He didn't even know what a sambar looked like but the Chinese doctor had said that only the horns of that rare creature could cure the Khan of Bangoor—and Jim had reason for wanting the goodwill of that ponderous potentate so, of course, he had to bag the beast. He found his sambar—despite all odds—but strangely enough it was not the khan who was saved by the magic horns but the quarry itself!

Published monthly by Popular Publications, Inc., at 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, 16, Illinois. Editorial and Executive Offices, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. Henry Steeger, President and Secretary, Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice-President and Treasurer. Entered as second-class matter October 2, 1935, at the Post Office, at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1946, by Popular Publications, Inc. This issue is published simultaneously in the Dominion of Canada. Copyright under International Copyright Convention and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction, in whole or in part, in any form. Title registered in U. S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Single copy, 25 cents. Annual subscription for U. S. A., its possessions and Canada, $2.50; other countries, 75c additional. Send subscriptions to 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. For advertising rates, address Sam J. Perry, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. When submitting manuscripts, enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return, if found unavailable. The publishers will exercise care in the handling of unsolicited manuscripts, but assume no responsibility for their return. Any resemblance between any character appearing in fictional matter, and any person, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional. Printed in the U. S. A.

BE OUT ON OCTOBER 11TH ◆ ◆ ◆

The Colonel and "Number One" ..... DOUGLAS F. YOUNG 83
McIver was a holy terror. In his own words "exacting"—to his subordinates "a pain in the neck." And yet, though his boy Jasper was unquestionably the clumsiest Number One in all Fu-ming, the testy officer refused to give him the sack. Here was a Chinese puzzle indeed, unless, of course, you happened to know the inside story of General Tsang and Liu—and Colonel McIver's jade ring.

Hill Smart ..... TED STRATTON 96
That city slicker sure made Pa look like an awful chump when he got the old man to put his mark on the paper that cheated his daughter Liz out of what was rightfully hers. But—as Pa proceeded to demonstrate right there before the jury when the case came up in court—some people can read and write and some are smart in other ways. Hill smart—that was Pa.

The Cincinnati Gittar ..... DAVE GRUBB 130
Red Coy hadn't no more than got that mail-order gittar onwrapped, seemed like, till he could make it sit up and sing sassier than a monkey on a stick. That ol' devil-box would do anything for Red, except get him the gal he'd set his heart on—the Reverend Arkie Price's daughter Sade. "No sir!" howled Arkie, who was a glory-shoutin' holiness preacher with a temper like Satan himself. "No shif'less gittar-player's gonna get my little Sade!" But when he heard that Cincinnati gittar strummin' out Jesus-tunes—that was different. Then the Reverend was ready to do business.

SERIALS

Home Is the Warrior (1st of 2 parts) ..... R. G. EMERY 10
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Sword Land (conclusion) ..... HENRY JOHN COLYTON 102
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Cover Painted for Adventure by Malvin Singer
Kenneth S. White, Editor

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

R. G. EMERY promised, you may recall, when his "Cheechako Pilot" appeared in these pages back in our February '45 issue, to expand the necessarily curtailed *Camp-Fire* notations which accompanied that story on his first post-war return engagement. With "Home Is the Warrior" corralling Aasie and McQueen and Morse Mixon, as well as their creator, safely on our reservation once more we reminded Colonel Emery of that promise so now he writes—

When I was first invited to introduce myself here at the *Camp-Fire* I couldn't say much for a variety of reasons. I have always found that trying to put biographical notes down on paper is a lot like jingling a handful of pennies in your pocket. You can sound pretty wealthy, so long as you never have to pull them out to be counted. Then the total is apt to be embarrassing. But quite apart from that, back in '45 I was on active duty, had the censor to buck and, as a good many of you *Camp-Firemen* must know, that was bucking to no point whatever.

However, K. S. W. says he wants to pad out the magazine (*Joke: Auth.*), so for the following let the blame be his.

The first vital statistic went on my books up in the Minnesota corn country almost exactly thirty-seven years ago. I left high school fifteen years later, coincidentally with the echo of the explosion of the World War I boom in farm lands. Every bank in the country was closed or closing and a dollar was twice as big as the hind wheel of a Conestoga.

The U. of Minnesota offered a football scholarship . . . on a contingent basis. I jumped at it and entered the School of Journalism. However, by the end of freshman season, Minnesota football being what it used to be, I had managed to work my way up to the fifth, I think it was, freshman team. That was a bit of handwriting on the wall which needed no interpreter. The 'contingent' clause operated, forthwith. Having been, as far back as memory goes, a lazy man who did not mind admitting it, I set out on a hunt for a source of tuition and rations a little less wearing than pearl-diving and furnace-jockeying. Someone told me of a competitive examination being held to fill a vacancy at Annapolis. I hied my-

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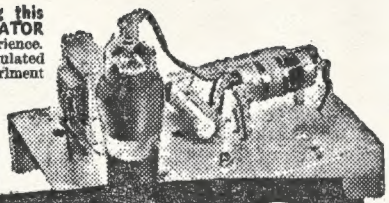

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(Continued from page 6)

self down to take it. I wrote everything I knew . . . some of it twice . . . in half of the allotted time. To help kill the rest of the four hours, I fiddled with a pencil while reading another set of questions I found in the back of the leaflet, relative to admission to West Point.

Somehow or other, the wrong set of papers got thrown away and I was notified in due course, in somewhat puzzled terms, that there had occurred an entirely unsuspected vacancy at the Military Academy. Naturally, nobody had applied for it unless my unsolicited examination paper could be considered an ipso facto application. If so, in the absence of any competition, I could have it.

I looked up West Point on a map, found it to be within the territorial limits, and joined the Army the following July. After four years of wrestling a slide-rule . . . a match which could have been decided either way at any given moment. . . . I graduated as a shavetail with a ticket to the Air Corps.

Otherwise, during the four years, I contributed some mediocre football—finding that being just good enough to make the traveling squad, but not so hot that you had to play all the time and then be too beat-up to appreciate those Saturday nights in New York, was really the way to enjoy the game. I boxed a little as a light-heavyweight during the winters, once succeeding in putting the intercollegiate champion, a gentleman from Georgetown, on the floor. (He got up, unfortunately. Very unfortunately for me.) And I pitched some baseball, once laying one in there for Babe Ruth in an exhibition game with the Yankees with which the great man almost decapitated me.

After graduation, I stayed with the flyboys for a year. I must be the only living man whom flying bores. I found it much too much like flag-pole sitting—without even the distraction of a pair of binoculars with which to search for sun-bathers on rooftops. So I went to the Infantry. About which you can say many things, but rarely that it bores you.

Between 1932 and Pearl Harbor, I served in most of the States, Panama, Hawaii and Germany; getting to see the first large-scale field exercises of Hitler's then new model with a Reichswehr division, which did me little good later. (They developed some new anti-personnel mines in the interim.) December 7th caught me in Alaska, commanding a company of the 4th Infantry. By natural process, I moved up to command the First Battalion of the 4th for a time; the same First/4th that Big Jack O'Reilly led to the rescue of two-thirds of a division on Attu.

Before that time, I had been shanghaied to act as Intelligence officer for the Alaskan Base Area, around Anchorage. The most notable accomplishment of my gang of military gumshoes was their assistance in the capture of the Jap espionage chief in Alaska. That was really an outstanding job of spy-catching. The Nip had been running a laundry in one of the coastal towns for twenty years, and was considered a solid granite pillar of the community. He was uncovered by the brilliant exploit of going through one of his trunks and finding a graduation picture of his class at the Jap Naval Academy, including the toothy puss of subject.

After six months of that, I went along with General Gene Landrum's—Landrum of the Andreanofs—Aleutian expedition, as Operations officer. We landed on Adak in August of '42 and put in a rather exciting year. A piece about the bottoms which carried that first Aleutian foray, and the inimitable Captain 'Squeaky' Anderson who kept them afloat, would have every sea-going writer in the business yelling for a closed shop. That is, if any editor who hadn't seen it for himself would publish it. As a sample . . . one of the cargo vessels was a four-masted barkentine (Squeaky said it was a barkentine; don't write to me) in tow behind *one of Admiral Dewey's gunboats.*

To get on. . . . I left the Aleutians in '43, after Attu, and put in a sabbatical year as chief of the Combat Training committee at the Infantry School at Fort Benning. Taught jungle fighting . . . naturally . . . after three years in Alaska and the Aleutians.

In the fall of '44, I was assigned to the 76th Infantry Division to go along and take a look at the situation on the other side. The division landed just in time to join the Third Army and help gnaw off a section of the Bulge. We fought in Belgium and Luxembourg and that was as long as I, personally, lasted. I came to grief on the Siegfried Line, at a thrice-damned place called Echternach, in Luxembourg.

Stop by sometime and let me tell you about the winter night that my regiment was on the left flank of Patton's Army at dark and on the *right* flank, 80 miles away, at dawn.

I was evacuated in February, '45, and have spent most of the time since in and out of a series of hospitals. The medics did a fine job on what they had left to work with and I am being retired this month.

But these *Camp-Fire* gatherings are supposed to be get-togethers of writing and reading men, not places for old soldiers to beat their gums. About writing then. . . . There was a Christmas Week at the Academy when some minor . . . of course . . . difficulty with the Department of Deportment was keeping me in. I happened to read a news item from Chicago telling of a gang of hoods running down and killing a blind veteran while making their get-

(Continued on page 139)

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HOME IS THE WARRIOR

McQUEEN was fairly drunk. Neither noisily nor visibly; of those signs, he never showed the first and rarely the second. He was just at the peaceful, happy stage where the fine edge of coordination is dulled by an inch or a second.

He pushed himself away from the Cheechako's bar, brushed the back of a big hand across a great blue-black beard and started down the long aisle to the door. He stepped around a little knot of talkers with exaggerated care. As he did so, he jostled a newcomer who was coming too heedlessly fast.

The impact was considerable. The other, sober man was thirty pounds lighter than McQueen's solid two hundred and it knocked him off balance. He staggered and all but went to his knees, coming up instantly with a spitting snarl. He was slender but not quite slight and, as he straightened, red hair and pale eyes, slitted like an angry cat's, were on a level with McQueen's own concerned gray ones.

McQueen said, "Mister, I'm sorry. I wasn't look—"

The red-headed stranger gave him time for no more. He struck without warning, throwing his right hand straight from the

By R. G. EMERY

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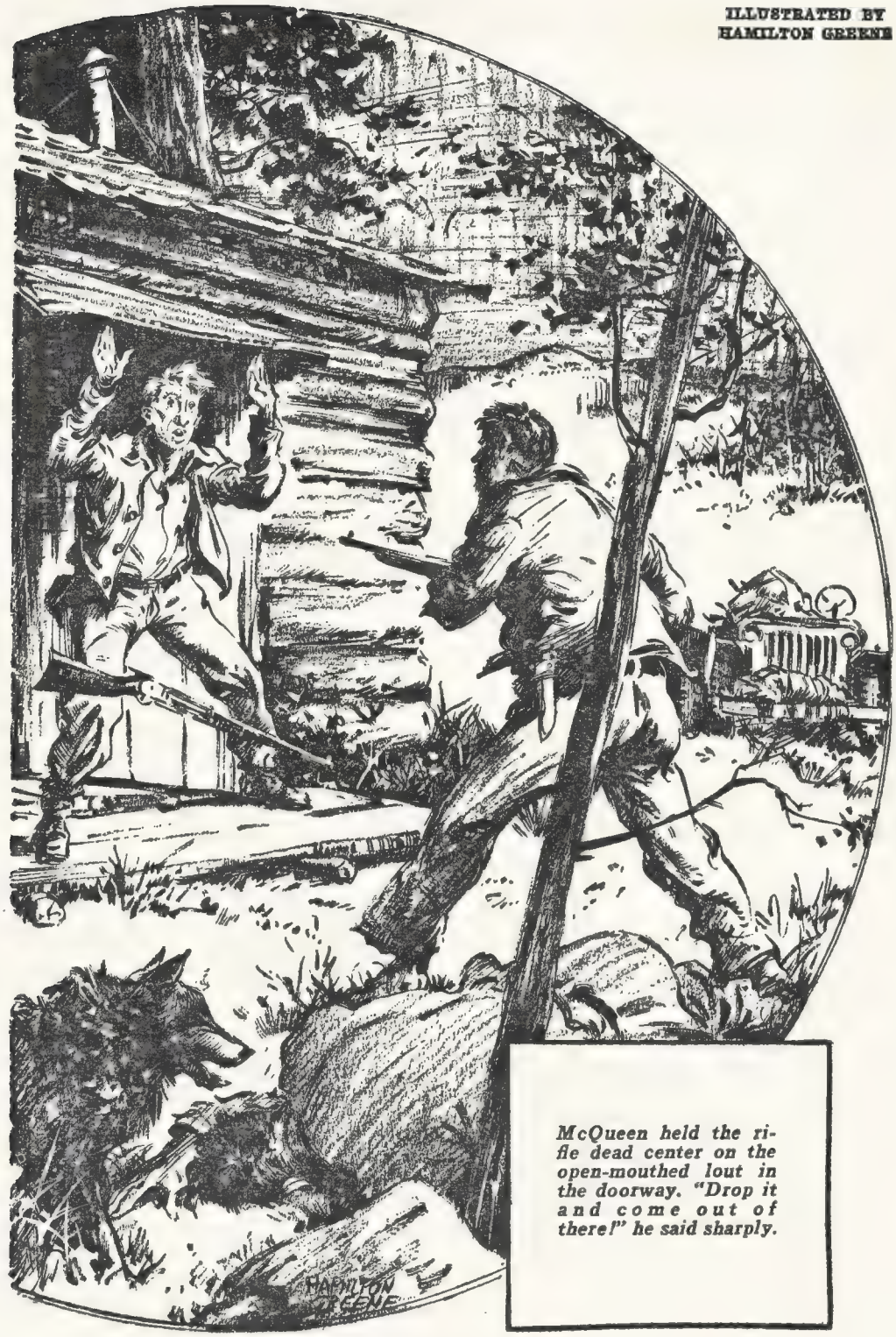


McQueen held the rifle dead center on the open-mouthed lout in the doorway. "Drop it and come out of there!" he said sharply.

shoulder with a snap, the fastest of all punches. McQueen had no chance at all and he felt the blow all the way to his heels. But the beard was some protection and the shock sobered more than it hurt him.

Instinctively, his own right hand flashed up and caught the other's extended wrist. Jerking sharply down and back, he pulled the red-head tottering forward. His left knee lifted, on the instant's verge of driving up into the bellicose one's middle. A voice stopped him. A woman's voice.

"No, McQueen! Don't do it!"

Startled, McQueen stared at the girl behind the red-head. She was tall and fair, smooth light hair tied down with a gay babushka and violet eyes wide with concern. But not frightened.

McQueen muttered, "And why the devil shouldn't I? I was trying to apologize, when all of a sudden—"

"I know. I still say please don't. Don't make it worse."

McQUEEN let the man's arm go and watching warily, moved away until he felt the edge of the bar against his back. The red-head straightened, rubbing his wrist. A little of the flushed temper faded from his face, and he rounded on the girl.

"Keep out of this, Aasie," he told her angrily. "I don't need any help."

She smiled at him and patted his shoulder. She said, "Of course not, Ken, but I had to stop you both. McQueen's a neighbor of ours."

McQueen's attention had turned to her, at the mention of her name. "Aasie?" he repeated. "You're Aasie Rogness, aren't you? From Fairbanks?"

"I was. Nils Rogness' daughter. My name is Gowen, now. This is my husband. John McQueen, Ken."

McQueen returned the red-head's nod. He put out his hand and the other took it with only a barely noticeable hesitation. People up and down the bar went back to their drinking.

McQueen said, "I'm glad to know you, Gowen. Sorry we started off on the wrong foot. I'm inclined to be a clumsy ox at times."

Gowen grunted, said, "I'm sorry, too—I blew my top. But I don't like to be pushed around. What's this about our being neighbors?"

They looked at the girl. She said, "Somebody told me that a McQueen, an ex-Army flyer, had a place up near the east end of Tustumena Lake. I wondered if it could be the McQueen who came to Fairbanks that time, during the war. When I got a look at you, a few minutes ago, I knew it must be."

Her eyes dropped to McQueen's shoe-pacs and came back up his long length of woolen pants and worn jacket to rest on the beard. She grinned. "You sure smell like a sourdough now."

"Hey!" McQueen exclaimed. "It ain't so! I've been in town two days and I've got a room with a bath . . ."

Aasie wrinkled her nose. "I wasn't sniffing. But I remember that you tried to look like a sourdough when you first came to Fairbanks, and I told you once that we could smell a cheechako as far as we could see him. Nobody would take you for one now. A cheechalker, I mean. Then it is you, up the valley?"

"That's right. I've built a shack up near the head of the Fox River. Where are you?"

"We've got a place down in the flat near Homer."

"Oh? I thought that was getting pretty well filled up."

Gowen broke in. "We found one," he said shortly. "Well, McQueen, we got to be goin'. I'll say again I'm sorry I went off the handle."

"No hard feelings here, Gowen. How about a drink?"

"Thanks, I guess not. We're on our way to the restaurant to eat. We'll maybe see you around."

Aasie said, "Goodbye, McQueen. Stop by Homer and see us sometime."

McQueen said, "Maybe I will."

They walked by him toward the dining room at the other end. McQueen continued on his interrupted way to the door and Anchorage's crowded streets.

He stepped out into the throng, turning toward his hotel. As he walked, he thought of something which made him grin. Seeing Aasie Rogness . . . Aasie Gowen . . . brought a memory of his first night in Fairbanks, four years ago; his first sight of Alaska. Expecting log cabins and snow drifts, mukluks and dog sleds, he'd been startled by paved streets and chrome-and-glass cocktail lounges.

Postwar Anchorage was something else again. In spite of its civilized veneer, Fairbanks had still been a small outpost on the fringe of the wild. You could walk three blocks in any given direction and prove that to yourself. And the people, no matter how they dressed or lived, had been an unique breed. They were Alaskans, and they gave the word a distinction in viewpoint and temperament. McQueen scanned the faces and figures streaming past him and thought that those days were probably gone forever.

Anchorage, port on Cook Inlet, central point of the Alaska Railroad, and garrison town to the Army and Air bases, was now a metropolis of twelve thousand souls and growing by the day. Combat Infantrymen from Fort Richardson and boyish pilots from Elmendorf Field jostled Aleuts from down the Chain and Kniks from the reservation at Eklutna. Pretty girls from the CAA and Base Engineer offices brush-

ed parka skirts with the no less pretty and only slightly out-numbered girls off the scattered Line. The Bartenders' Union was a political force in the town and quietly dressed gamblers were indistinguishable amongst numerous similar gentry whose business was even less openly advertised.

McQueen thought that this, in 1946, was probably little different from the scenes through which he might have moved in Lead, in Helena, in San Francisco or a dozen lesser places three-quarters of a century before. A page of history was turning itself back for one more reading.

"The last frontier, eh?" McQueen muttered to himself. "Well, they can have it. Either I'm getting old or, as Aasie said, I'm really turning sourdough. Whatever it is, I'd rather be back at Tustumena."

"You know me, son. Never yit said no, f'r fear I'd get the habit."

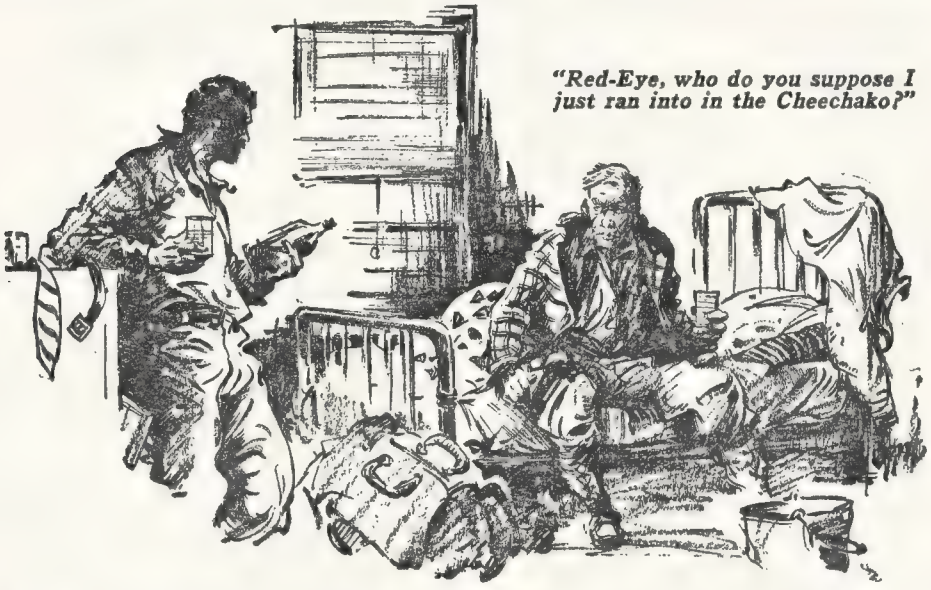
McQueen found tumblers and poured two drinks. He said, "Red-Eye, who do you suppose I just ran into in the Cheechako?"

"Dunno, Johnny. Betty Grable in a bearskin?"

"Next thing to it. Do you remember Aasie Rogness, old Nils Rogness' girl, from Fairbanks?"

The old man looked at his glass. "Sure do," he admitted, noncommittally. "Fust time you seen her?"

"First time. I didn't know she was in the Territory. I talked to a man from Fairbanks, a month or so ago, who told me she'd gone Outside several years ago. But she says—she had a husband with her—that they're homesteading down near Homer."



"Red-Eye, who do you suppose I just ran into in the Cheechako?"

HE TURNED off Fourth Avenue and walked down the side street to the Anchorage Hotel, flaunting its three stories on the lip of the bluff overlooking the Inlet. He found a visitor in his room.

A wispy figure in a worn plaid mackinaw perched on the window ledge, one watery eye on the street below and the other on an untapped fifth of Johnnie Walker on the dresser.

McQueen walked in, said, "Hello, Red-Eye."

Red-Eye Jameson licked whiskery lips, said, "Hello, son. Where'n time did you come by that there redcoat on the shiffonyear? I ain't seen one o' him 'r his brothers since '42."

"I got friends in the Air Corpse." McQueen picked up the bottle, twisted out the cork. "How about a small handshake with the gentleman, just to renew old acquaintance?"

"She went out, all right. They come back in last spring."

"The guy from Fairbanks also said she went out to marry that big paratroop lieutenant, Riggs. You remember him?"

Jameson said, "I remember."

"Well, this wasn't Riggs. His name was Gowen."

"I know. M' sister's boy."

McQueen said, "How's that again?"

"M' sister's boy. M' nevvew. The skunk!"

McQueen regarded the old man with an amused eye and poured him another drink. "You know more things. How come you never told me you had kin around?"

"I ain't seen *you* but twice, since you came back up here. An' there wasn't no reason I should tell you that. I ain't proud o' th' connection."

"Is that a nice way to talk about your relatives? He seemed a little quick on the trigger but I supposed he was all right. Aasie married him, and I always thought she had pretty good sense."

Old Man Jameson bent a sorrowful gaze upon him. "You're young an' inexperienced, son. Time you seen what all I have, you'll know a woman'll marry anything that grows whiskers. Sometimes even that don't. An' it ain't my fault that m' sister Janie was one o' them. That lad's a civet cat, sure's my name's Jameson."

McQueen chuckled, studying him. Charley "Red-Eye" Jameson, so McQueen was told, had spent forty of his sixty-odd years in the Territory. Trapper, prospector, Yukon riverman and, lately, agent for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, he had been everywhere and seen everything. And his inquisitive nose was backed by a mind as sharp as a skinning knife.

"How sure is that?" McQueen asked. "You tell so many lies. By the way, you still working for the Indian Bureau?"

"That's right. It still ain't generally known, so you might keep it confidential."

"Means nothing to me. But I wonder how many people don't know it."

"Mebbe one or two."

McQueen returned to his original topic. "About this Gowen . . . what's wrong with him? Aasie Rogness did me a favor once and I've had sort of a brotherly feeling for her ever since."

Jameson grunted. "Brotherly, eh? I'm glad I got no daughters f'r you to have that kind of a brotherly feeling for. Why, Ken Gowen's all right, I guess. I jus' don't happen to like the young sharpshooter. F'r one thing, he put in the duration in a airplane factory in California, while the rest o' you boys was out gettin' shot at. *Dee*ferred, they called it."

"So? That doesn't sound like the type to be homesteading down the Kenai."

"Why not? He's a farm kid, originally, and where's there a better chance? Besides, Aasie prob'ly had a good deal to do with it."

"I suppose she did." McQueen took a drink and thought a moment. He said, "That's something else, now. Where in hell did they find a quarter section open on the Homer flat? I thought that was filled up tight. In fact, I know it was. When I filed on my piece, I looked at the Land Office layout."

Jameson's eyes dropped. "They didn't homestead. They bought out old Charley Cook."

"Oh? The boy must have saved his E bonds."

"Dunno." The old man seemed uneasy. "I don't think Charley stuck 'em very deep. He was gettin' the itch to move. That country's been fillin' up too fast to suit the old-timers."

"He was a friend of old Nils, maybe?"

"No, I don't think that was it."

JAMESON'S fidgets became plainer. He got up, creakily, and moved to the window. His eyes on something outside, he veered off the subject.

"Speakin' of old friends, who else do you think's in Anchorage?"

"Ten thousand people too damn' many. Who?"

"Morse Mixon."

McQueen grunted. "It's regular Old Home Week." His gaze on Jameson's back sharpened. He remembered the old Indian agent's sometimes devious ways of getting to a point.

"Sure is. He asked about you, too."

"Nice of him."

"Well, now, I doubt that. I've heard Morse called a lot o' things, but none of 'em was nice."

"Why was he asking about me? What in hell reminded him of me?"

"He heard you was back in the Territory, I guess."

"Hell he did," McQueen said flatly. "Mukluk mail still running, eh?"

"Morse ain't in Fairbanks any more. He sold that Mile Post roadhouse of his an' moved down here."

"Bigger field of operations, I suppose."

"I reckon. Morse likes to be where things're goin' on."

McQueen said, "Well, I don't. I had to come into Anchorage for some stuff and I thought I'd stay a few days and get a little bright-light tan. But I've been thinking since yesterday that I'd rather be back at Tustumena. Hearing that Morse Mixon's in town decides me. After all, I came back to Alaska for peace and quiet."

Jameson hadn't heard him. He said, "Morse'd like to see you, Johnny."

"I've got nothing Mixon's missed."

"You got no reason to be scared of Morse, Johnny."

McQueen snorted. "Who the hell said I was? Anyway, if Mixon wanted to see me, he'd have no trouble finding me."

"No, I don't reckon he would. He didn't *send* for you, Johnny He ain't got me runnin' errands f'r him, jist yet. He only put out an offer to buy a drink, case you cared to come 'round. Mebbe he don't want to walk in on you, seein's he don't know how he'd be welcomed."

McQueen said, "Red-Eye, you old billy-goat, turn around and look at me! Now, exactly what's biting you?"

Jameson turned and gazed at McQueen, levelly. The film peeled momentarily off the old man's ice-blue eyes. He said quietly, "Might be wise to talk to him, Johnny. Listen to what he's got to say. Never hurts to know what the other man's got on his mind."

McQueen snorted. "Maybe not. Except that I'm damned if I care what Mixon might have on his mind. No, thanks."

Jameson's eyes dropped. Staring at the worn carpet, he muttered, "I sure do hate to put it to you this way, son. But I'd take it as a favor if you'd go listen to him. I guess I am runnin' errands for Morse, after all. I told him I could get you."

"So it's like that."

The old man nodded. "I need something he's got. It isn't much but . . . the deal was that I could get you to talk to him. He didn't figure you'd want to."

McQueen said, "Well, if that's the way it is, let's go get it over with. I'm going down the railroad this afternoon."

Jameson dropped back into character. "I better not be goin' with ye. What Morse wants to say is sort of private, I expect. Anyway, I gotta go see Aasie and her blankety-blank husband." He paused and spat ostentatiously out the open window. "I'll jus' tell you where you c'n find Mixon. He's stayin' in Apartment D, over in the annex."

"Here in the hotel?"

"That's right."

"He's come right out in the open, hasn't he?"

"I dunno about that. People he might want to see c'n walk in an' out o' the hotel doorway on Fourth a lot less noticeable than sneakin' down an alley. He's doubtless got other places he hangs out, anyway."

"I suppose. He must have. Or else he's changed. Even a semi-respectable trap like this doesn't seem to be in character with Mixon, as I remember him."

"There's a little in what you say," Jameson agreed. "Morse's hanging out a kind of a respectable front, these days. You might even find out why."

McQueen laughed. "And if I should, you wouldn't mind hearing, is that it?"

Jameson said, "I never mind hearin' things. Never can tell when they'll be useful."

CHAPTER II

NO TROUBLE AT ALL

McQUEEN went down the hall and through the doorway in the building wall into the apartment wing. He found D, and rapped.

A metallic blonde opened the door at his knock. She let McQueen in, said, "I'll tell Morse," and disappeared.

The room was spacious and quietly furnished. Two doors opened off opposite ends. Almost as soon as one of them closed behind the woman, it swung out again and the man came in.

Morse Mixon was shorter than McQueen, possibly two or three inches under six feet, but his shoulders brushed both sides of the door as he came through. He was clean-shaven, long flat lips in the broad, heavy-jawed face calmly expressionless. McQueen estimated him to be around forty, one way or the other, and about as impressive a chunk of man as he had ever seen. And as tough.

The lips cracked in a brief smile as Mixon saw his visitor. Black eyes flashed up and down, taking McQueen all in. He said, "How are you, McQueen?"

"I'm well."

"You look it. Came through the war all right, eh?"

"All but my disposition. That's still bad."

Mixon chuckled. "I remember it was never good. Would a drink help it? What'll you have?"

"Scotch."

Mixon chuckled again. "Well, now, it just happens I've got a little Scotch. Water, or just Scotch?"

McQueen sighed. "I was afraid you would have. All right, water."

He sat down. Mixon went out the other door and returned with bottle and glasses.

"You don't seem to want this drink much, McQueen."

"I can think of people I'd rather have it with."

The big man didn't seem insulted. He said, "You shouldn't talk like that. Not looking for a job, are you?"

"Not with you."

"I've still got an airplane or two."

"I'm not interested in airplanes, either."

"No? Don't tell me you're through flying."

"For the time being, at least."

Mixon pretended surprise. He stared at McQueen, his eyes finally dropping to the beard. He gave another rumbling chuckle. "So you've really turned sourdough? If it ain't flyin', what will you be doing?"

"You know what I'm doing."

"I heard you built a shack up in the hills by Homer and are sittin' on your tail up there, is all I've heard. You really wouldn't be interested in a flying job?"

"Not from you."

"Nothing out of line, this time. That fur racket's a thing of the past." He waved a big hand, brushing it aside. "This'd be strictly legitimate. Wouldn't you be interested in a regular airline? Somethin' small at first that might grow?"

"No."

"No? Hell you wouldn't! Suppose you had a piece of it?"

"Look, Mixon," McQueen said patiently, "in the first place, I wouldn't have anything to do with a deal you were in if it paid off a million bucks a year with a Hollywood harem thrown in. In the second place, you didn't get me in here to talk about airplanes. Did you?"

Mixon looked hurt. "I just wanted to buy you a drink, McQueen. For old times' sake."

"Yeah?" McQueen stared meaningfully at a

Red-Eye Jameson

point on Mixon's big chin just in front of his ear. It was still one of the major regrets of McQueen's life that, the one time he had tangled with Mixon and dropped the big man with that right hand, he hadn't stayed around long enough to enjoy it.

MIXON remembered, too. He rubbed the spot, reminiscently, and said, "You're still the only man who's ever had me off my feet, if that's what you're thinkin' about."

"It was," McQueen assured him.

"Even so, you got no better than a draw as I recollect it."

"I was interfered with."

"Yeah, you were. I always try to keep friends around. Well, I got no hard feelings over that. Towards you, I mean. I haven't even got an ambition to try you again."

McQueen said thoughtfully, "To tell the honest truth, neither have I. You're too damn' big."

Mixon nodded. "I ain't little. Nor—speakin' of other things—am I little enough to be bearin' grudges. An' I could do something for you, McQueen."

"Break three more ribs for me?"

"Don't talk like a kid. Let's forget that stuff. I got a proposition you ought to listen to."

McQueen, remembering Jameson's last advice, said, "I'll listen. Go ahead."

"You got a place down on Tustumena, about thirty miles above Homer. That right?"

"Nearer fifty. You probably know where it is."

"Not exactly. I knew you had a claim staked someplace around there. Well, here's the deal. I'm int'rested in that country, myself."

"How do you mean, 'interested'?"

"I got a little money together, one way and another, an' I want to get hold of somethin' permanent, you might say. Build a house that's better than a shack, an' all that."

"At Homer?"

"Sure, why not?"

"What's the attraction at Homer? There's nothing there but a two-bit fish cannery. What few fishermen come in only work a sixty-day season, sometimes less. There wouldn't be much wool to clip there, would there?"

Mixon looked hurt again. With so much practice, his performance was improving. "I didn't say a joint; I said a house. A place to live in. Raise a family, mebbe."

That last shocked McQueen completely out of any possible answer. The big man went on, "Homer's a nice place. Good climate. Some day the boats'll be stopping there; it's a perfect set-up for what I got in mind."

"Just what is it you've got in mind?"

"A cow ranch."

"Oh," McQueen said. "What kind of cows?"

"Why, just cows. What kinds is there? Raise 'em and ship some on the railroad—could drive 'em over the mountains to Seward, like in the old days in the West. Rest of 'em I could ship right outa Homer, once the boats come in."

"I see. Well, why tell me?"

"For a thing like that, I need room. Open country an' lots of it. Now, you know how it's got to be down there at Homer. All the flats are homesteaded until hell won't have it. By farmers. Truck farmers, spud farmers . . . mostly hope farmers, fresh out of the States."

"They've been coming in fast," McQueen agreed.

"Sure. Thicker than mosquitoes in May. And f'r what? Where they goin' to get at that kind of business?"

"I don't know," McQueen admitted truthfully. "I said I was no farmer. But they want homes. And they're building up the country."

"Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why build up *that* country? It's wilder'n a bitch wolf down there. If they want to farm, why don't they go to Matanuska, 'r stay in Kansas?"

"That's easy. There was land open at Homer. Free land."

Mixon grunted. "Yeah! There *was*. There sure as hell ain't now. That's where you come in."

McQueen laughed. "I wondered where I did. Right here, eh?"

"That's right. I need some help an' it won't hurt you none to give it to me."

"I know it won't," McQueen assured him. "But go on talking, if you're enjoying it."

"All I need is a . . . well, an agent down there."

"You've got me all confused. An agent for what?"

"For what? Why, to buy me up those homesteads and get me my ranch."

"Why don't you go buy them yourself? It's your money . . . or is it?"

He got a little reaction with that, from Mixon's eyes. But the man went on talking. "I can't do that, McQueen. Lots of 'em are ready an' willing to get out. But once they knew I was after the land, the price'd go sky-high. That's an old story, you know that."

McQUEEN got up. "Not the way you tell it, Mixon. It sounds real new and interesting. But not to me. I'm too busy, right now."

Mixon's eyebrows climbed. "Busy? What at?"

"I'm building a lean-to on my shack. Going to raise rats to feed to tomcats and sell 'em for mink. That's an old racket, too, Mixon. Don't tell me you never heard of it."

Mixon said placidly, "Yeah, I've heard of it. All right, McQueen. We'll stop tellin' jokes. I want you down there for a front."

McQueen sat down again. "That sounds more like it. Give me whatever's free. What'll I be hiding from the public view?"

"Nothin' but what's legitimate. This is an honest deal an' you're known to be honest, McQueen. I ain't."

"No," McQueen agreed. "There would be quite an argument about that."

"Sure," the big man admitted comfortably. "I know that. So—I want an agent."

"Why me? There's others you could get, who wouldn't come as high."

Mixon's eyes were blandly expressionless. He said, "Well, you are already sort of in the deal, McQueen. You squatted in the wrong place down there."

"Oh, that's it. I'm to buy myself out, too?"

"I don't want you in the way. I'd rather cut you in."

McQueen shook his head. "Forget it. I mind my own business, strictly. I'm only interested in one thing, peace and quiet."

Mixon said, "How long will that last? I don't think you're the peaceful type. Look, McQueen! This country's steamin' right now. It's just about to boil over every which way. You saw the street down there. And there's more comin' in all the time. The Klondike wasn't a patch on what this's goin' to be. And who's goin' to get the benefit of it? A few skookum boys who're smart an' tough enough to make it stick. That's why I want you, McQueen. You're smart and you're tough."

Morse Mixon

"Also honest."

Mixon nodded. "I figure you are. That's why I want you. I've got a little money an' I'm goin' to get a little more. I'll put it behind you. Between us, we can take over this damn' Territory."

McQueen got up again. "No, thanks. I wouldn't have it as a gift."

"Use your head, Mac. You must like it up here, else why'd you come back? If you're going to live in it, why not own it?"

"Don't call me Mac," Queen told him irritably. "No thanks, Mixon. I want nothing to do with you, no matter how legal you claim to be. Just leave me be."

Mixon shook his head. "It won't do, McQueen. I gotta have you where I don't worry about you. You get too much fun out of a rumpus."

"I told you, forget it. I've had all the excitement I can use, these last few years. Just don't bother me."

The big man didn't stir. The black eyes were still serene. He murmured, "Those tomcats of yours . . . I hope they do keep you busy. Real busy."

"They will."

"And if you have any visitors—an' you probably will—you better be hospitable. Real hospitable."

His hand on the door, McQueen looked back at him. "I've been trying to tell you," he said,

"that I'm only interested in minding my own business. I don't know what you're up to and, frankly, I don't give a damn. You stay away from my tomcats and I won't bother your cows. Thanks for the drink."

"That's all right," the big man said. He continued to watch McQueen until the door closed behind him.

ON HIS way back to his room, McQueen thought that conversation over. There were a good many things about it that he had good reason not to like. He told himself wryly, "As a public-spirited citizen, I've got a right to be concerned whenever Morse Mixon so much as passes by my neighborhood. Personally, all I can say is that the son-of-a——— better not stop in passing. I came up here to rest in peace and I'm by God going to do it if I have to scratch the same sentiment on Mixon's headstone."

But Mixon was something to worry about and nobody knew it better than McQueen. Unless it was Red-Eye Jameson. In addition to his basic profession of saloon keeping on a sizable scale, Mixon was a casual murderer. McQueen had good reason to know, having once been the object of such attention. And old man Jameson had been trying to catch him at his dealings in illegal fur for years.

There was a point. Jameson probably knew a good deal more about this "cow-ranch" business than he pretended. In fact, McQueen was sure he did. He decided that he had a few things to tell the old man when he saw him again.

Right now, he was principally interested in getting out of town. Anchorage these days was obviously no place for a peace-loving man.

He packed his toothbrush and extra shirt along with the hunting ammunition and the remnant of the case of Scotch—which had been the principal reason for his trip into Anchorage—in an old Air Force B bag, and shouldered it down the hill to the railroad station. It was too heavy to carry but in his present mood, McQueen enjoyed it. It gave him something tangible to be mad at.

He stacked his bag, bought his ticket, and went out on the platform to wait. Then he saw an even better target for his ire. A faded plaid mackinaw wandered toward him. McQueen stepped out to meet it.

"Red-Eye!" he exploded wrathfully. "I want to talk to you!"

The old man looked around him. There was no one within earshot. "Sort of thought ye might," he said mildly.

"You meddling old cockroach! What's the idea of trying to get me tangled up with Morse Mixon again?"

Jameson said quietly, "I didn't do that, son."

"No? Who the hell sent me to see him?"

"I told you it's better to know as much about what the other man's thinkin' as you can. You were already on Mixon's mind. You're on his trap-line again, Johnny. The first time, he didn't come out so good with you. He ain't forgotten it."

"What trap-line of his am I on, now?"

"Didn't he tell you?"

McQueen said, "I think you know what he told me."

The old man nodded. "I c'n make a good guess."

"All right, then, if you know that much, tell me the rest of it. What's he really up to? What he told me wouldn't have fooled an Aleut. He didn't even take the trouble to tell a real good lie."

"I don't suppose he did. He was just testin'."

"Testing for what?"

Jameson gave him a sidewise glance and grinned. "But you don't care, Johnny. You ain't interested."

McQueen glared. "That's right. I'm not. You want to get up a Homesteaders' Protective Association, you run it yourself. And take your own beatings."

"Kinda looks as if I'd have to."

"Damn' right you will. And don't you forget it."

"All right, son," the old man assented meekly. "Don't git mad. I was goin' to ask if I could come down and go moose-huntin' with you, one o' these days. You're right in the middle of the best place there is, I guess you know."

"Sure, Red-Eye. You're always welcome, so long as you come socially."

"Thank ye. I'll probably be along in a week or so. I'll try to bring no trouble with me."

CHAPTER III

AN OLD ALASKAN CUSTOM

McQUEEN left the train at Johnson's Landing, just below Divide. He could have saved a few miles and an hour by going on but he was glad to be off the thing. The Alaska's rolling stock had been hand-me-down even before the war and those years of frantic effort and indifferent maintenance had done it no good.

Too, he had left Typhoid Mary, the jeep carry-all, and the dogs with Jake Johnson, a few hundred yards up the track at the mouth of Twenty-Mile Creek. As the train pulled out on its way to Seward and he started down the right-of-way, Nora, the Labrador, spotted him. He could see the dot of black come around the corner of Jake's cabin, hesitate, and then line out arrow-straight across the marshy flat. In two minutes, she was on him, all grin and

wriggle, great muddy paws reaching for his shoulders.

McQueen satisfied her that he was returned all in one piece, and tossed the B bag to his shoulder again. A hundred yards from the cabin, he saw Hobey, the Siberian, come out and wait. Such uninhibited antics as Nora's were beneath the big dog's dignity but his quivering muzzle and the jerking of the tight-curled brush over his back showed that he wished they weren't.

Coming into the yard, McQueen rubbed the broad head that moved over beneath his hand. He didn't have to stoop to reach it. He said, "Hi, Hobey! What did you do with old man Johnson? Get short of rations and have to chew him?"

The little guide said from the door, "That wolf! All he *would* do fer me was eat. But he does aplenty of that. Time snow comes, you better throw a harness on 'im and work him down some. He's gittin' too big. Unless you're plannin' to use a saddle, instead."

McQueen laughed. "I want him big. When the snow gets too deep for the jeep, he'll be all the transportation I'll have unless I can break that black wench to pull."

"He'll do all right by himself." Johnson estimated. "Where'd you git that malemute, anyway?"

Never mind his yacht... how's his
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"He's no malemute. He's a pure Kobuk River Siberian. An Air Force transport pilot got him for me in Nome."

"One o' them Eskimo dogs, eh? No wonder he looks like a wolf. He's prob'ly got about a quarter."

"Why? Just because he's big and gray-tipped?"

"Them Eskimos stake their bitch-dogs out, ever' so often, in order to breed a little wolf back in. Makes 'em hardier an' easier keepers."

"Is that a fact, or another sourdough yarn?"

"I think it's true. Anyhow, wolf 'r dog, he's a smart 'un. Look at 'im sittin' there, listenin' to ever' word to see if we got it right. Well, come in an' drop your pack. Supper's about ready. How'll you go for a nice, thick tenderloin, fried in kidney fat?"

"Grade A beef, I trust?"

"Never put your trust in anythin' less. I slipped over crost the creek yest'day and what do you think? One o' them settlers' steers from crost the Pass was trespassin' right in my big alfalfa patch."

"Had horns, too, eh?"

"Well, it had somethin' that proved it was no dairy cow. What the hell, anyway? Time the moose come up into the hills, the season's open. Th' Game Commission may be civilizin' Alaska, tooth an' nail, but they ain't yet taught a bull moose to read. Come and set, before they send somebody to arrest us."

McQUEEN turned in early that night. Full of moose-meat and the half of another fifth of Scotch, he was dozing while his wizened little host was still pottering about the cabin in his long johns.

The old guide finally came to light on the edge of his bunk. The black dog was sprawled in front of it, her nose to the dying fire. The Siberian was across the cabin, where he could put his muzzle to the crack of the door and still keep McQueen at his shoulder. Johnson wriggled his knobby toes in the thick fur of Nora's back, watching Hobey thoughtfully.

He said, idly, "Had a couple of callers, while you were gone, Johnny."

McQueen murmured something, sleepily. Johnson continued, raising his voice a little, "Yeah. They were askin' about your place."

McQueen came awake. "My place? What for?"

"Didn't say, as I remember. Seemed to been told where you were, though. Said they knew it was up along the Pass, some'eres."

"What did they look like?"

"Not much. I sort of got the impression they was tryin' hard to act like dudes. But I don't think they was. I think they knew their way around, all right."

The old man continued to bother Nora, but he watched Hobey. The big dog's ears were up at the sound of their voices. "Your pooch didn't think much of 'em either. The wolf, I mean."

"Do you think they went up the Pass?"

"I figger they did. Matter of fact, I tracked 'em to the head of the crick."

"Oh?"

"Yeah. Unless they went down the north side to Kasilof or kept on to Homer, they're still up there, some'eres. But you won't be stumblin' on em' unawares. That big dog—he didn't like 'em atall."

The fire flickered and dwindled and the cabin was quiet as McQueen thought about it. Johnson spoke once more, before calling it a night.

"They was wearin' belt-guns, too. Underneath their coats. First time I've seen that up here in forty years."

He pulled out, following high ground along the creek—Hobey loping fifty yards in front.

McQueen loaded up shortly after daybreak. He put his baggage and the chunk of moose Jake had given him in the back of the jeep. Nora jumped to the side seat and snuffled with lady-like impatience to be off. The husky trotted up front and sat, watching her from the corner of one amused eye.

Johnson circled the jeep, kicked at a big tire. "That's certainly quite a gadget. How'd you rig the wheels like that?"

"They're duals," McQueen explained. "When I bought it, they had a lot of salvaged wheels so I got an extra set, just to double the flotation. Now, she'll practically climb a tree."

"Ain't gettin' gas a lot o' trouble?"

"Not much. I hauled a couple of drums in,

last summer. Now, about all I use it for is packing stuff in from the railroad or up from Homer and a tankful will make the round trip. I can always fill up at the downhill end."

"How'n hell do you get down to Homer with it? That's pretty steep."

"I grubbed out a track. Wasn't much work. With those duals, she'll climb anything I've tried, so far."

HE SAID goodbye and pulled out, following high ground along the creek. Hobey loped fifty yards in front, following their old track, the white underside of his brush bobbing along above the low undergrowth.

A half mile from Johnson's cabin, they began to climb and the bush thinned out. In another mile, they were rolling through deep forest aisles and the yellow cottonwoods of the stream course gave way to the red and gold of frost-tinted birch.

McQueen's carefully surveyed track led up one shoulder of the Pass, about midway between the stream and the rim. In places the jeep tipped itself up on edge to the point where Nora had trouble keeping her seat, but the grade they climbed was nowhere very steep. McQueen rolled along in second and enjoyed the scenery. There was a drowsy enchantment in the drifting, painted leaves and the sun-drenched hillsides which lulled the ran-

kling anger which had been burning in him for the past twenty hours. He decided that Red-Eye Jameson was a trouble-sniffing old fool and that Jake Johnson had been only trying to dramatize one of the infrequent ripples in his little hermit's puddle.

When McQueen had, six months before, begun looking for the spot on which to build his hunting cabin, he had come down the Kenai because there was no better place for it on the face of the earth. Moose bred up on the fringes of timberline, summered in the great swamps, and herded like cattle up into the foothills in the autumn rut. Sheep and goat were abundant along the sharp-cut peaks of the Kenai Range and bear were all over the place.

The Government was making it easy for vets to homestead and would-be farmers were flocking into the flats near tidewater, in this first postwar year, in numbers reminiscent of Oklahoma land rush days. McQueen, wanting no part of that, had packed over the Pass, exploring. One lazy day, resting near the summit, he had investigated a tiny stream, tumbling down through a narrow, twisting break in the rim. He found a cup-like valley less than half a mile in diameter, carpeted with a red-top meadow and timbered around the margin.

He looked no farther. Going back to Elmendorf Field, he made the deal for the surplus jeep and, after that, building his cabin had been simple. He brought in a pulley, a block and three hundred feet of half-inch rope. Using the jeep as a donkey, snaking out his logs and hoisting them in place had been a cinch.

McQueen, at first, was no woodsman but he didn't mind doing things over until he got them right. He found that long days with an axe in his hands—and nobody to talk to but Hobey and Nora—were just what the doctor ordered for him. The tight shell of tension which had been gripping tighter and tighter in those last summer days of '45 cracked and peeled off like an old skin.

The cabin was fifty miles from the railroad, on the Seward side of the range. Towards afternoon, they had climbed into wispy tendrils of low-hanging clouds. By the time he forded the small creek at the mouth of his home valley, the big double wheels splashing through unimpeded, visibility was limited. Shafts and brief floods of blinding brilliance broke through openings in the cloud cover and made it worse.

Hobey, smelling home, had loped on ahead. Then McQueen saw him stop at the bend around which the valley opened. He was frozen, one big paw lifted like a pointing setter's. From a hundred yards behind, McQueen saw his lips curl away from his teeth and the hackles rise on his shoulders.

On the instant's impulse, McQueen swung the jeep into the bank and stopped. He thought a moment, keeping a hand on the Labrador's collar. There was little doubt that the husky saw something he didn't like, but it might be no more than an inquisitive bear nosing about the cabin.

John McQueen

McQueen snapped a leash on Nora's collar, anchoring her to the seat, and pulled the Springfield from its boot along the frame. He threw a shell into the chamber and laid the rifle across his knees. He twisted the jeep back into the track and drove ahead.

The cabin came in view as he rounded the bend where Hobey was still waiting. There were no four-footed powlers in sight. But there was smoke curling up from the cabin's chimney and the door stood half-open.

McQueen muttered to himself and kept on. Hobey stepped aside as the vehicle passed him, then came along, keeping level with McQueen at the wheel. McQueen drove straight for the cabin.

When he was halfway across the valley, a man stepped out the door and stood, waiting. He had a rifle cradled in his arms.

McQueen swung a half circle in front of the cabin and stopped, even with the man and facing him, twenty steps away. He sat still, studying the trespasser.

HE WAS big, even under a bulky jacket, and heavily bearded. Above the beard, sharp little eyes were set too close on either side of a fleshy, bulbous nose. The beard was a nondescript brown, tobacco streaked at the corners of a snag-toothed mouth.

McQueen decided he hadn't seen the guy before. He said, "Well, what the hell?"

"You McQueen?"

"I am."

The big dog moved in a little closer to the jeep, his eyes unwavering on the stranger. There was a deep, careless rumble in his throat. The man glanced at him. He looked as if he'd seen Hobey before. There was still no sign of the second man, if these were the two.

McQueen's mind worked on it. The set-up smelled, for some reason. And, if so, his spot wasn't good. The missing character probably had altitude on him. The book called for strategy and a bit of maneuvering.

He asked, "Hunting?"

"Yeah, that's right."

McQueen looked meaningfully at the chimney. "Find everything all right?"

The man grinned. McQueen thought he didn't look like a wolf. More like a fox. Or a sheep-killing dog. He said, "We made out. Glad you don't mind us movin' in."

"Oh, no. Old Alaskan custom, so they tell me."

The man grinned. It could have been a grin or a sneer. He said, "Shore it is. All pals on the trail."

McQueen nodded, asked innocently, "You up here alone?"

That posed the "hunter" a question. If he lied, he'd have to make his move right now. He thought it over. McQueen waited. The guy had probably been warned about McQueen. But he was the type easily built up by a little success. He thought McQueen was either fooled or buffaloed or both.

So he turned his head, yelled, "Tex! C'm out an' meet Mister McQueen."

A shadow moved away from the window. A second later, the man who had made it showed himself in the door. He was shorter than the other and younger. The wispy fuzz on his chin could hardly be called whiskers, nor the smirk on his loose-lipped face intelligent. But he had another rifle in his hands.

McQueen stepped out of the jeep and walked forward. The Springfield hung, muzzle down, from the crook of his right elbow. Hobey moved forward with him. The tall, brown-bearded one stepped aside, more out of Hobey's way than McQueen's. They were less than a yard apart as McQueen passed.

If he had passed. Instead, at the point opposite the tall man—McQueen still facing the cabin door—he threw the rifle-butt straight out to the full extension of his right arm, shoulder-high. The heel landed squarely on the slack jaw with a solid *chunk*. Brown-beard went down, face first.

Completing the motion, McQueen flipped the butt back to his shoulder, holding dead center and waist-high on the open-mouthed lout in the doorway. That one was slowly wit-gathering, his own weapon still cross-wise in his hands.

"Drop it!" McQueen's voice was sharp and bitter.

Nerveless hands opened slowly and the rifle clattered on the log step.

"Now come out of there!"

McQueen backed him around until he had him beside Brown-beard. "*Slide* your friend's rifle this way—on the ground! Butt first! Move, damn you!"

The kid obeyed, stepped back. McQueen noticed then that Hobey was standing over Brown-beard, watching hungrily for the first wiggle. McQueen thought, "Well, well. That pooch has possibilities."

He grinned, said, "Watch 'em, Hobey!"

The young one shrank at that, evidently more afraid of the big husky than he was of McQueen's rifle. McQueen said, "Tex! Is that what he called you?"

"That's m'name."

"Tex what?"

"Tex Colver," sullenly.

"What's his?"

"Him? That's Ford Odom. And you was lucky, lemme tell you! Ford'll—"

"Yeah," McQueen cut him off drily. "I can see Ford's a regular wolverine. Who does the bad man work for?"

"He don't work for nobody."

"How about you?"

"Me, neither. Except for Ford."

"What are you doing up here?"

The punk was sullen again. "Huntin'. Ford told you. We just put up a night in your shack. That ain't no crime."

The man on the ground twitched. Hobey whined a little, eagerly. McQueen called him back. Odom sat up, slowly, felt of his jaw. It seemed to be still working and he clambered slowly to his feet, glancing at McQueen once, then looking away.

McQueen said, "Listen, you two-bit hard guy! I'm not going to waste any time asking questions. I'd get nothing but lies and I know the answers anyway. But I'm giving you a message for Morse Mixon. You get the hell out of here—all the way out—and when you get there, you tell Mixon I'm still not looking for trouble. But—and you tell him—if he gets in my hair once more, I'm coming to see him about it. Now get going!"

Odom mumbled, "We were just huntin'. What about our guns?"

"I said scram. I'll leave your rifles down at

the railroad, some day, maybe. Now . . . I'm starting to count."

They turned, set out across the meadow. Hobey, holding himself back with an effort, trailed them part way. When they came to the fringe of timber at the valley's entrance, Ford Odom had fallen a few steps to the rear. The dog was in the middle of the meadow, a hundred yards behind them and twice that from the cabin.

McQueen saw Odom stop and turn back, tugging something from under his coat. There was a dull report and Hobey leaped suddenly sidewise. McQueen swore and threw up the Springfield.

"Jake *told* me they were all gunned up!" he cursed himself. His first shot ripped through the grass a dozen yards wide of Odom, now zigzagging for the timber. He made it before McQueen got off another.

CHAPTER IV

WOLF PACK

THE INTRUDERS had had time to create a surprising amount of disorder inside the cabin. Every dish and cooking utensil in the place was dirty. From the litter of grass and crumpled spruce tips in the corners, McQueen concluded that his roof had sheltered more than two uninvited guests. Most thought-provoking was the fact that he found unmistakable evidence in the rear of the building that horses had been there.

McQueen washed the dirty dishes and took the bedding out to air. He sliced a couple of pieces from the moose round Jake had given him, and carried the rest of it down to his cool-box in the creek.

Hobey came to the door while the meat was frying, walking on all four legs. McQueen looked him over for any nicks but Odom's shot had evidently missed. McQueen promised himself to do better next time.

Thinking it over, he could find no reassuring excuse for the visitation. The broad man must have sent his hoodlums not only before he and McQueen had talked, but before he had had any idea he would see McQueen at all. Perhaps Odom had been coached to make some proposition. He hadn't acted like it.

Mixon must be working against some sort of imminent dead-line. But what? That "ranch" gag was so transparent that McQueen was sure Mixon had never intended it to be believed. Why, else, though . . . what conceivable reason could there be for the man's interest in a few dozen homesteaders?

As he turned in that night, McQueen decided that he had better drop down to Homer and investigate. Maybe the homesteaders could tell him something. He could pay a call on Aasie Gowen and her husband and see if they might have some idea as to what was going on.

McQueen ground his teeth in anger at the necessity for bothering with it. He had not come down the Kenai—nor to Alaska—to be involved in anything like this. To be involved in anything at all. His hope had been for a lazy, completely uncomplicated year in which to fish a little, hunt a little, and generally unravel the kinks of five years of war. To forget some of the things he'd seen; particularly, the names and faces of men with whom he'd planned to do something exactly like this, but whose final peace had come sooner and permanently.

But—he still had better find out.

So, the next morning, he serviced the jeep, called the dogs, and drove again out of the little valley. This time, he turned the other way, south and west. The trail down to Homer, past Tustumena Lake and then following the Fox to Kachemak Bay and Cook Inlet, was steeper but not so long as his yesterday's journey over the pass from the railway. On the way down, the forty-odd miles were easy. Coming up was a full day's job, but the trip down usually took less than half of that.

An hour from the cabin, they skirted the edge of Tustumena itself. Ducks and geese by the thousands rose in heavy-winged, clamoring clouds from the margin as McQueen drove by. Nora evaded his clutch at her collar and sprang from the seat to flounder out belly-deep into the muck, driving another flotilla of huge blue geese into the air, protesting deafeningly.

Away from the lake, they crossed a wide red-top plateau, making toward the distant line of willows marking the course of the Fox. The wheel-marks of their two trips earlier in the summer were still visible in the grass.

McQueen caught himself thinking, "Mechanical aids may be a fine thing for a backwoodsman but they sure make you damn' easy to track." That, however, led to another thought. You might go a step farther, and really have something. A plane. He considered the technical difficulties which might be involved in getting a light plane into the meadow in front of the cabin. There was plenty of room, if the approaches were good enough. He decided that they probably were, if a man was handy with one of those grasshoppers. McQueen didn't know whether he was or not; he had never flown one.

HE STAYED with the Fox until it turned due south, dropping then into a deepening canyon. McQueen's tracks led more to the west, keeping to the high ground. From this point on, the country widened out

into what were called the Homer flats, lowering in terraced steps all the way to sea level at the Inlet, twenty miles distant.

The going was easier here and McQueen shifted to third. He drew up on Hobey. The big dog looked back over his shoulder, tongue lolling, and whined a little. Hobey had loped over not much less than a hundred miles of rough country since yesterday morning and been shot at once, to boot. McQueen pulled up and let him jump to the rear seat.

Except for the growth along a few small streams, the land was open and treeless all the way to the sea. Shacks dotted the landscape in spaced profusion, chimney smoke rising in the still air on every hand. McQueen gave over trying to count them but there were even more, he thought, than in the early summer when he had last come down; and both sides of the river were full then.

Public lands had been re-opened to homesteading in the spring. The President had signed the order on March fourth; it became effective on the twenty-eighth day thereafter. That was April first. Then veterans had had preference for ninety days, or up to July first. It was now late August.

McQueen shook his head. All the men who had taken up claims between April and July had to be vets. No civilians could have filed before the first of July and, by that time there was probably little left. There hadn't been much, as a matter of fact, the first week in June when McQueen had filed his own claim up on Tustumena. In other words, it looked as if Mixon might have been telling the truth. That, McQueen refused to believe.

He struck a wagon track as he came abreast of the first scattered cabins, and followed that until it joined the black-topped road between the abandoned Army air strip and the town proper.

Homer was a rag-tag little frontier settlement of tar-paper shacks and a few frame buildings along the pavement which now formed the main street. Most of the foothill cabins had been of logs, but not these this far down from timber. Lumber and wall-board, shipped from the southeastern coast above Seattle, all the way across the Gulf of Alaska and up Cook Inlet, was cheaper and easier.

There was a dull report and Hobey leaped suddenly sidewise . . . McQueen swore and threw up the Springfield.

"About time for some enterprising cuss to start a sawmill, up the Fox somewhere," McQueen mused, as he followed the backtop down the bluff toward the dock and the salmon cannery buildings. "Maybe that could be my opportunity."

He shuddered at the idea and drove around the rear of the shut-down cannery to the Standard Oil warehouse.

He filled the jeep's tank and the spare cans he had brought along. He agreed with the man working the pump that the dual-wheeled jeep was quite a gadget, and that a lot of moose were coming up off the alder flats in the rut, this year, if the homesteaders didn't knock 'em

all off before they got to the hills. Then he drove back uptown for supper.

Garry's Roadhouse, he saw as he parked in front, had a new sign: *INLET BAR AND RESTAURANT*. Inside, it was about the same as the last time he had seen it, except that the smooth-planked bar was twenty feet longer, and there were about that many more customers than usual. Ordinarily, in the off season as now for the cannery, Garry's, along with the rest of the settlement, would have one foot in the grave.

Not all of the customers, this evening, were homesteaders, either. McQueen had been long enough in the Territory on his two trips to be able to tell a cheechako from a sourdough, himself. And some of these were no tenderfeet.

Whoever they were, they crowded the bar, and McQueen saw none he knew. So he passed it by and went on into the dining room. This, at least, was still typically Alaskan roadhouse. The bare plank table was innocent of any furnishings except those absolutely essential to the business at hand, and the drying-rack for outer clothing off the trail was still in place behind the huge sheet-iron stove.

McQueen was the restaurant's only customer. He ate his meal in solitary peace, broken only by the hubbub from the front room. There were more and louder drinkers at the bar than its room had been designed for and it was all but impossible to pick any particular conversation from the general clamor, even had McQueen been especially trying.

He heard one irate voice, evidently a homesteader's, telling of a fire which had leveled his barn. The voice told it over and over again, adding nothing but volume and anger to each telling. McQueen gathered that the man did not think it had been an accident. And he heard one other thing which made him grin.

Wolves, so he heard, were raising considerable hell with the homesteaders' livestock. Wolves, down on the flats at this time of year! Still, McQueen could not help but wonder, curiously, just what it could have been that made the man think so.

HE PAID for his supper, cajoled a bundle of meat scraps for the dogs from the barrel-shaped half-breed matron in the kitchen, and went out into the street. The noise from the bar followed him out.

He had intended to sleep at Garry's. Now, feeding Hobey and Nora, he listened to the increasing racket—and thought of the aroma from the sweaty undershirts and wet wool socks which festooned the drying rack around the stove in the big bunk-room upstairs—and changed his mind.

He had a bed-sack in the jeep; it was only eight o'clock. He could see the Gowens this evening and sleep on the trail, up at the end of the wagon track. If he did that, it would get him home by early the next afternoon.

He flipped the last of the scraps to the dogs and went back into the bar. The first man he saw was wearing an old GI field jacket.

McQueen asked him, "Do you happen to know the Gowens, friend? Ken Gowen? Could you tell me how to get to their place?"

The room went suddenly quiet. The man turned slowly to McQueen and looked him up and down before he answered. He said, "Yes, I know Ken Gowen. I know where his farm is. Why do *you* want to know?"

"Mainly," McQueen said, more puzzled than irritated, "because I want to go there. Is there something wrong with that?"

The fellow looked him over again. The rest of the room was still listening. McQueen's anger began to outgrow his curiosity.

"Never mind. I'll ask elsewhere."

The other had made up his mind. "No offense," he said mildly. "I'll be glad to tell you. I could direct you better, though, from the street. Mind stepping outside?"

McQueen turned and went through the door. In the street, the man in the field jacket stared at the jeep. "Yours?"

McQueen nodded.

"How'd you manage to get it?" the other asked, a little wistfully.

"I had some friends at Elmendorf Field, at Anchorage. They put me onto it, and chiseled a priority for me."

The man put out his hand. "My name's Kelvey. I was a crew chief in the Fifteenth, in Italy."

McQueen shook hands. "McQueen. I was in the Eighth, and then the Seventh. Bomber pilot."

Kelvey said, "Glad to know you, McQueen. You live around here?"

"Up the valley, a ways. Now, about the Gowens . . . "

"Sure, I'll tell you. But— were you fixin' to drive out there tonight, by any chance?"

"Right now."

"Well, I was goin' there, myself. If you wanted to give me a lift, I could take you right to it."

McQueen said, "Get in. Wait until I put one of these hounds in the back seat."

He tied Nora's leash to the frame beside the rear seat. Kelvey stepped in and McQueen swung the jeep around in the street. Kelvey said, "Head out on the black-top as far as it goes. Gowen's place is one of the last ones up on the river."

They left the few scattered lights of the town, coming on in the slow late-summer twilight, and rode in silence for a half dozen

miles. The dusk deepened, and all about them lights winked from unseen cabin windows.

Kelvey stirred, and said, "Fact is, there's a sort of a meetin' out at Gowen's, tonight."

McQueen said, "Oh?"

"Yeah. That's why I was a little owly at first, back there in the Inlet, when you asked me where their place was. We're gettin' a little suspicious of strangers around here."

"You homesteading too?"

"That's right. I've got a quarter section over on the other side of town. I haven't done much with it yet. Nothing but throw up a shack to live in. I don't have any family 'r anything, so I put in this summer workin' in the fish cannery."

"Good way to make a stake," McQueen agreed, noncommittally.

"That's what I thought. That's why I wasn't sure I'd go out to Gowen's, tonight. Havin' no livestock, yet, or buildings to speak of, I haven't been hurt like some of the rest."

"What do you mean, 'hurt'?"

"Some funny things been happening. Barns burning at night—one boy's house even caught an' went up. Left him an' his wife—a couple of kids, too—livin' in a tent again."

McQueen grunted, his eyes on the road. The jeep's lights were not very good. "Gas lantern, probably."

"I wouldn't know, for sure," Kelvey admitted. "I wasn't there. But it seems funny so many barns should catch from lanterns, late at night when nobody was usin' a lantern."

"Wood fires and sparks from short chimneys, then."

"Maybe. But, now, there's these wolves. I ain't so sure about them, either."

McQUEEN laughed. "Do you mean the wolf packs that are killing stock? I heard you people talking about them, while I was eating. No, I don't think so, either. If it were the middle of a really tough winter, a few might get down this far. But hardly at this time of the summer."

"I didn't think so, either." Kelvey gazed speculatively at Hobey, trotting along at the forward fringe of the shine of the jeep's lights. "That dog, now," he asked irrelevantly, "he's a real sled-dog, isn't he?"

"That's right. Siberian husky."

"He looks a good deal like a wolf, don't he?"

"Some. People tell me the Eskimos who raise this particular strain breed in some wolf, every now and then. It may be true, for all I know."

"He looks pretty wild. As if he could be pretty fierce."

"I suppose he could be. But he isn't, especially. What the devil are you driving at?"

"No offense to you. You probably keep your dog to home—I don't even know where you call home, for that matter. But some kind of animals *are* running stock. Calves and even cows have been pulled down. One guy shipped in twenty sheep—good ones. He lost 'em all in one night."

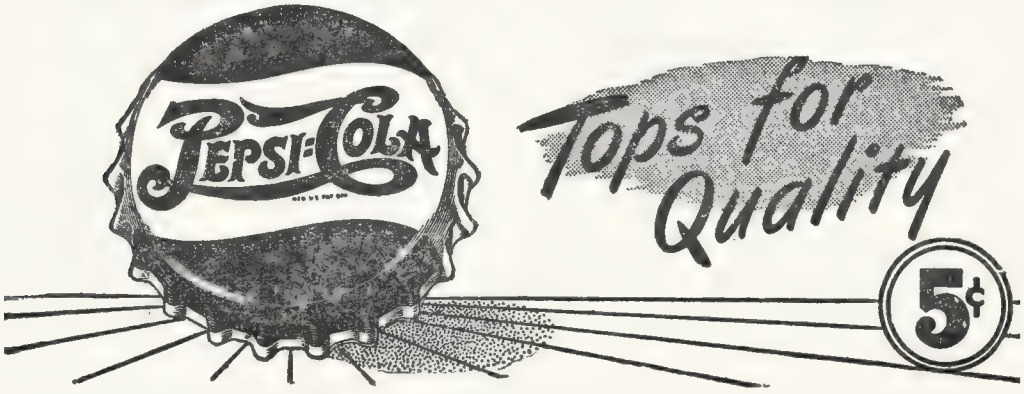
McQueen said, "I begin to get it. You think there are loose dogs around—is that your idea?"

"I think somebody has turned 'em loose on us. Nobody around here owns any of those wolf-dogs—malemutes, or whatever you call 'em. Something on four feet, with teeth, is doing it. I'm like you; I don't know if it's wolves."

McQueen thought about that. He asked, "You said something about a meeting at Gowen's. Is that what it's about—these so-called wolf packs?"

"That's right. Them, and the other things. Gowen passed the word around that we ought to get together and talk it over."

"Just what are you going to talk about?" McQueen asked impatiently. "Seems to me that's the point. I'm a little bit concerned in this, myself. I'm a homesteader, too, in a manner of speaking. If something is going on, I'd like to know what the hell it is, as a matter of curiosity, if nothing else. Well, I hear a lot of mumbling—and some loose talk in a saloon—



Mulcahy broke in, fussily. "Mrs. Gowen, I recommend we postpone this until your husband comes back. He may even understand what you two are talking about."

but so far nobody has really said anything. What do you think is going on?"

Kelvey was surprised. "What's happenin' is simple enough. Seems to me somebody is trying to get us out of here. The homesteaders."

"Who is? And why?"

"Dunno who. Why . . . well, I guess these sourdoughs don't like us comin' in here. They want to keep the country wild."

"Look, Kelvey," McQueen told him, "a sourdough, if he thought he was being crowded, would get up and leave. He wouldn't think of interfering with you. That's what makes him a sourdough. I mean, they say a 'sourdough' is a man who's shot his bear, used the Yukon for a latrine, and had scandalous relations with a klootch. That—the general idea expressed by that—is a lot of hooey. Basically, a sourdough is a guy who is downright hipped on the subject of doing exactly what he pleases, when he pleases, how he pleases. He makes a religion out of letting everybody else do the same."

"I wouldn't know," Kelvey conceded. "But Gowen's wife—she's a native—I mean, she's lived up here, not that she's an Aleut 'r anything like that—"

"I know Mrs. Gowen."

"Well, she thinks somebody is tryin' to run us out."

"That all you got to go on? What Aasie Gowen says, and these 'wolf packs'?"

"That, and the burnings, and the fact that guys have been coming around wanting to buy some of the fellas out."

"They've been doing that, eh? Who are they?"

"Nobody we ever know. Just stray characters like those in the Inlet, tonight. They get you into a card game and try to get you to put up your claim. Or they fasten onto you at the bar, if they think you're a little drunkee, and make a joke out of it. Offer you a couple hundred

bucks and a ticket Outside, where you could throw a real party."

McQueen said, "I see." He wasn't sure he did, but the various pieces were beginning to fit together a little. Somebody wanted the Homer flats. By his own statement, it was Morse Mixon. But why did he want them?

Kelvey said, "Turn off to the right at the next track you come to. Gowen's place is about a half mile away, on this side of the river."

CHAPTER V

FRONTIERS ARE FOR FIGHTERS

THE cabin's outline was vague in the darkness. A faint glow came from two tightly shaded windows. By that dim light, the mass of another building loomed indistinctly, fifty yards or so to the side and rear.

McQueen parked the jeep in the dooryard. He left Nora tied to the seat, told Hobey to stay around, and followed Kelvey up to the door. Aasie Gowen opened to their knock.

Her eyes widened at the sight of McQueen, but she smiled with evident pleasure which she was at no pains to conceal.

"McQueen!" she said. "Hello! How did you hear of this?"

"I was coming by, anyway. Kelvey, here, offered to show me the way."

Kelvey said, "I supposed it was all right. He says he's got a claim, too, around somewheres. But I guess you know all about that."

Aasie said, "Of course. John McQueen's an old friend. And we're thankful to have him here tonight. Let me introduce you, McQueen."

The room was sizable and pleasant. Colorful curtains at the windows matched the blue-and-white checked cloth on the table, and doors were fitted to the two openings opposite the

front entrance. Four other men had risen from chairs about the room. Ken Gowen was not present.

"All of these are neighbors, Johnny. Joe Hoover has the next place on the river, towards town, and . . . "

Hoover was a short, slender man in his twenties, with level gray eyes and a good handclasp. The Larsen brothers were tall and blond, with barn-door shoulders. The last of the four was a bulky little man with round cheeks and thinning hair, whom Aasie called *Mister* Martin Mulcahy, a little ostentatiously.

Hoover looked capable and the Larsens were plainly mid-western farm boys. McQueen wondered a bit about Mulcahy.

Aasie said, "All neighbors, all homesteaders, and all ex-servicemen."

"Captain, Transportation Corps," Mulcahy added, pompously. "And you?"

"Air Force," ex-Colonel McQueen told him briefly. "Aasie, I understand this is a business meeting. Kelvey tells me the business amounts to the same thing I came down to ask you about. What is supposed to be going on down here? Do you know?"

The rest of them found seats again. Aasie remained standing, facing McQueen. "I'm afraid I do," she said. "Before I tell you, though, I want to ask you something. You saw Morse Mixon in Anchorage the other day, didn't you?"

"I did. If it matters."

"That's what we want to know. If it matters. What did he say to you?"

"Private conversation."

"Was it, McQueen?"

"Not another soul was listening."

Aasie bit her lip, studying him. She said, hesitantly, "I don't want to insult you. I've got every reason to believe that you're a white man, Johnny. So—let's let it go at this: When you left Mixon, whose side were you on?"

McQueen snorted. "The same side I was on when I got there, damn it! My own."

Mulcahy broke in, fussily. "Mrs. Gowen, I recommend we postpone this until your husband comes back. He invited us here. He may even understand what you two are talking about. I don't."

McQueen raised his eyebrows. Aasie said, "Ken's out at the barn. He'll be in soon. We heard those 'wolves' again, a little while ago. They sounded as if they were in the hills just above us and Ken went out to watch. Perhaps you haven't heard about them, McQueen?"

"The wolves, you mean?"

Aasie looked at him. "I know what they really are, as well as you do. But they are acting like wolves."

McQueen nodded. "I've heard. Some trapper's sled team got away from him last winter, probably."

"Possibly. Not probably. Not many trappers or sled teams down the Kenai."

"Maybe not. I wouldn't know. But let's get on with this. Judging by your questions, you think Morse Mixon is behind it. What makes you think so?"

Mulcahy made a yapping noise and the others stirred. Aasie said, "Maybe it would be fairer to wait for Ken. He won't be long. We have only the two cows, and they're both in the barn. Ken is just watching to see if the pack passes here."

"Why doesn't somebody get out after them in the daylight," McQueen asked, "if you're so sure they're hanging around?"

"A lot of men have tried. But we've no professional hunters. And we're busy trying to harvest what little we've grown this summer. Red-Eye Jameson did promise me that he'd come down and try to—"

A SHOT, somewhere very close, broke in on her. The room was silent, all of them frozen to straining attention. The second shot came closely after the first.

Kelvey exclaimed, "He must've got one! Seen 'em, at least. Hey, McQueen! That dog of yours was tied to the jeep, wasn't he? Or was he?"

On the selfsame instant, McQueen whirled to the door, yanking it open and plunging into the darkness outside. Blinded until his eyes readjusted themselves to the dark, he was forced to stop until he could see.

Nora was whining in the jeep. McQueen

called, "Hobey! Ho-o-bey!" But the big dog did not appear.

While he waited, he heard a voice yelling in high excitement from the direction of the barn. "Hey! Aasie! C'm out here, you guys! I got one of the bastards!"

Blind or not, McQueen ran towards the sound of the yelling. Somehow, he got the barn between himself and it. Trying to cross around in rear of the building, he ran into a wire fence and foundered half over the top strand. By the time he untangled himself and went back around the other way, the back door of the cabin opened, throwing a triangle of light across the yard. Gowen, his bare red head plain in the glow, shuffled into the midst of the illuminated space dragging a heavy, grayish object which trailed slackly in the dirt at his heels.

McQueen reached him just as Aasie Gowen and the others crowded through the cabin door. He took one look at Hobey's limp gray body and swung from the hip. His fist took Gowen full on the side of his head just as he straightened. The red-headed man's feet left the ground completely as he arced over backwards,

McQueen took one look at Hobey's limp gray body and swung from the hip.

piling up on his shoulders as they met the ground. He kicked once and then lay still.

McQueen lifted the big dog in his arms and walked blindly at the group before the kitchen door. They gave way before him and he carried the dog in and laid him on the table under the swinging lantern.

Blood was still streaming from the two wounds, one through the lungs and one through the husky's head, just below the ears. That one had blown half his skull away as it emerged and must have killed him instantly, whether it was the first or last to hit him.

McQueen straightened slowly. Aasie, at his shoulder, breathed, "Was he yours, Johnny? Oh, I'm sorry!"

There was a commotion at the door behind them. Gowen, halfway through it, was struggling in the hands of Kelvey and Joe Hoover. His lips were writhing over bared teeth, unrecognizable sounds pouring out. There was a light of pure madness in his eyes.

Kelvey and Hoover succeeded in twisting the rifle from his hands, but continued to hold him. McQueen moved around until the kitchen table was between them.

He said, "Gowen, this was my dog, damn you! He'd never done you or anybody else any harm. It's too bad there's a law that says I can't kill you. But God help you if you ever cross my path again. I'll beat you senseless, every time you do."

He picked up the dead dog again and moved toward the door. Kelvey and Hoover pulled Gowen away.

He walked out and the door closed behind him. He was around the house and nearly to the waiting jeep before he knew he was being followed.

Aasie Gowen said, from behind him, "Don't run out on us, McQueen. You're mad now, and I can't blame you. But think it over."

McQueen stopped. "Damn it!" he said, exasperated. "I just socked your husband, remember? Get away from here before he decides to shoot *me!*"

"This is no time to be silly, McQueen. I know. If I were a loyal wife, I should probably be taking a shot at you, myself. I'm loyal, all right, but this is something bigger than that. We need help, McQueen, and I'm not going to let you go until I at least have a chance to ask you for it."

"What the hell do you mean 'help'?"

"Morse Mixon is trying to run the homesteaders off the flats."

"I'll take care of myself."

"Maybe you can. But we can't."

"Where's the difference?"

"Mixon's tough, McQueen. You know it, and I know it. He's tough, and this is his country. He knows his way around. Our boys don't."

"I'll put in with you there."

"They don't. But you do. And you're tough, too, McQueen. You even handled Mixon once, remember? You're the only one on our side who can. That's why we need you, McQueen."

McQueen said, "Look, Aasie. You're a nice girl and I like you. Even if you did marry that red-headed ape inside. But I told Charley Jameson this, the other day, and now I'll tell you. I don't want trouble with Morse Mixon or anybody else. I came here for peace and quiet, and I'm by God going to get it."

HE MADE siwash camp beside the trail as soon as he reached timber line. He spread his bed-roll so deep in a thicket of buckbrush that he missed seeing the red glow which painted the sky behind him, down the valley, along towards morning.

At sun-up, he and the black dog were on the trail again. Even though their progress was slower, bucking the grade, they reached home while it was still light. Visibility lasted long enough for McQueen to dig a grave on a little hump at the edge of the red-top meadow, in the shade of a tall spruce. He buried the big husky there, some black thoughts at the baneful affairs of men which cannot let even a dog live and die decently in peace, serving Hobey as requiescat.

There was no evidence around the cabin of any more callers. McQueen himself was allowed to live in peace until the late afternoon of the third day after, broken by only one incident. Towards the middle of the day following the evening he had buried Hobey, he thought he heard a shot from down the trail toward Tustumena and Homer.

However, there was no doubt about his visitation on the third day. He was at the table in the cabin, halfway through his solitary supper, when the Labrador pricked up her ears and crossed to the door. Pawing it open, she went out and, a moment later, he heard her deep-toned bark from the step.

McQueen rose and moved to a window, thoughtfully propping a rifle ready to his hand. Times had changed, around Tustumena. A cavalcade of, at first glance, at least a dozen horses was riding in through the defile at the foot of the meadow. McQueen's hand reached out for the Springfield as he recognized the burly figure on the lead horse. Morse Mixon, big as life and riding in as if he owned the place!

Then McQueen saw Red-Eye Jameson's faded plaid jacket on the second horse and the bright bandanna tied around Aasie Gowen's hair just behind that, and he hesitated. But when he stepped out into the dooryard, he still left the Springfield, chambered and ready, just inside the door jamb on the right-hand side.

As the column drew closer, he recognized

more of the riders. Joe Hoover and one of the Larsens were behind Aasie. McQueen almost reached for the rifle again as he saw Ford Odom and the boy, Colver, riding sixth and seventh. The eighth man, he didn't know.

The ninth, though, he did. The last two animals in line were carrying packs. Ahead of them, a big-bodied sorrel was carrying a man who lay in a queerly stiff fashion face-down, across a wooden pack-saddle, his out-thrust arms jerking to each step of the horse. McQueen stared at the sheaf of red hair, swinging limply, and swiveled to stare at Aasie.

She gazed back, her face white and tight, and the blue eyes hot and hating.

The eight riders fanned out around McQueen, standing at his door, and pulled up facing him. Mixon spoke first. Jerking his head at McQueen, he said to Jameson, "There he is. Need any help?"

"Don't reckon so," old Red-Eye answered. McQueen was startled to see that he was covered by the rifle in Jameson's hands, across the saddle in front of him. "Jest step out a leetle, McQueen an' reach! Joe, ye mind slidin' down an' seein' if he's packin' any artillery?"

McQueen, completely at sea, lifted his hands. Hoover dismounted and walked over to slap his armpits, then went into the cabin. McQueen heard him pick up the Springfield and unload it.

McQueen took a deep breath, said, "What goes on, Red-Eye?"

"Some handcuffs, did I have any. Seein's I ain't . . . Larsen, suppose ye pass a piece o' rope around his arms in back of him, jest above his elbows."

McQueen lowered his hands. "Just a minute! Drop or no drop, Red-Eye, suppose you tell me what this is all about. Before anybody puts another damned paw on me."

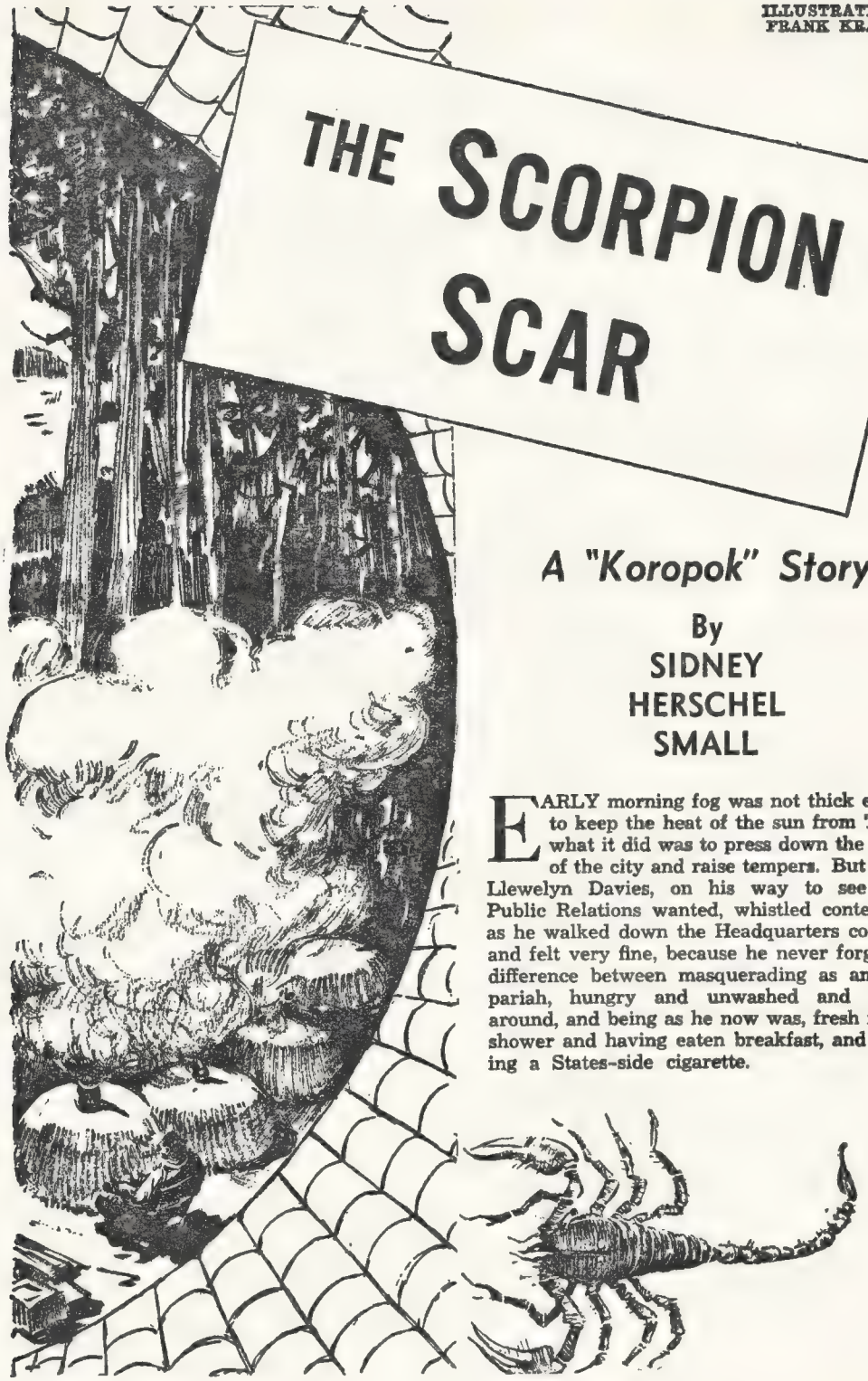
Morse Mixon, at McQueen's left, laid a rifle across his lap, lined it in on McQueen's middle and fingered the trigger. "Suppose you shut your trap and do as you're told, McQueen. I don't know about Jameson, but I won't stand for any monkey-business."

Jameson said, mildly, "Don't git excited, Morse. He ain't hung, yit. I wouldn't be surprised but what he will be, but we still have to do it all accordin' to Hoyle." To McQueen, he said, "McQueen, as Depitty United States Marshal of the Third Judicial District, Territ'ry of Alaska, I'm arrestin' ye for the killin' of Kency Gowen. Anything ye say will be remembered an' testified against ye."

(END OF PART I)

At the bottom of the chasm, partially veiled by steam, Davies saw the figures of men, and strange round high mounds.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER



THE SCORPION SCAR

A "Koropok" Story

By SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

EARLY morning fog was not thick enough to keep the heat of the sun from Tokyo; what it did was to press down the smells of the city and raise tempers. But Major Llewelyn Davies, on his way to see what Public Relations wanted, whistled contentedly as he walked down the Headquarters corridor, and felt very fine, because he never forgot the difference between masquerading as an Ainu pariah, hungry and unwashed and kicked around, and being as he now was, fresh from a shower and having eaten breakfast, and smoking a States-side cigarette.

Public Relations always wanted something from the man who had been in Japan all through the war. While Davies had argued for flight duty after the occupation, and managed to get up a little, he no longer rebelled at being assigned to Headquarters in Tokyo. Japan in transition was a strange place, with its plots and counterplots, and Davies was aware that he served to more purpose by being available to AMG, G-2, and Public Relations than by flying. He himself wondered at the strength of those cross currents, deep, unseen, and not always internal, which were cutting more and more foundation from the Japan of the past.

A sergeant was busy at a typewriter when Davies entered the PRO's office. Major Harrison's desk was piled with papers, but the major was not there.

"Sir," the sergeant said to Davies, "the major was called away—"

"You go call him back," said Lew. "When I get a castor oil assignment I always like to swear at the fellow who's holding the spoon."

The sergeant kept his face sober. "The major dictated his request, sir," said the noncom, standing up and going to Harrison's desk. "He said that if there were any questions he would be available later."

"I know the answer to that one," grinned Davies. "Later will be after I've done what he wants. I suppose it's got to be done immediately?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'll finish my cigarette while you find Major Harrison. Tell him I left my glasses in my room and can't read anything."

The sergeant looked at the alert black eyes under the shaggy brows of the dark, stocky American who had been able to disguise himself so as to fool both Japanese and Ainus, eyes which had to be good to pass the flight physical. He wanted badly to grin; but it would be smarter to play dumb and save whatever face he could for his own officer, Harrison, particularly because the sergeant intended to request a week-end pass where there was supposed to be good food, geisha, and iced Sapporo beer. So he kept his tanned face straight as he said, "Sir, Major Harrison did not say where he—"

"Try the north balcony," suggested Davies solemnly, sitting on the edge of Harrison's desk. "There's usually a morning breeze there. Sometimes it comes down from the north, and sometimes it's being batted around."

"Is that an order, sir?"

Davies nodded; and when he was alone he wondered just what Harrison had on tap this time. It might be something to which Davies would object, or it might be something which the Public Relations officer hated to ask Davies to do, Harrison being a decent fellow with the tough job of trying to please everyone. But, either way, Davies wanted it first hand.

AS Lew had guessed, Harrison was found without difficulty. He said, as he came puffing into the office, "Damn it, Davies, it's sweltering. The whole thing's written out. I'd have gone over it with you except that it's perfectly plain."

"Plain that I won't want to do it?"

Harrison growled, "You've got no more choice than I had. It comes straight down from the C. O." Harrison wiped his face. "I don't see how you keep so cool. I feel like hell. No sleep. Damn mosquito got through the netting."

"You're soft," jeered Lew.

"See how tough you are when you hear this one," Harrison retorted ominously. "I tried to get you out of it. Told the general that you're checking AMG's information on parties and politics. He brushed that aside. Said he wanted you, and that you've got to be damn careful. Said he was more afraid of having things fouled up by these men than by anything the Jap politicians can do. Said—"

"What's it all about?" demanded Davies.

Harrison said, "Fraternization."

Davies threw back his head and laughed. He said to the sergeant, who appeared deep in paper work, "Which would you prefer, Sergeant, a visit to a tenth century temple or a fat little Nip gal filling your glass of beer?"

"Personnel engaged in work involving military secrecy must not indulge in alcoholic beverages, sir," said the sergeant, thinking of the pass he wanted.

"What the devil have I got to do with fraternization?" asked Lew. "I could give the boys plenty of tips, having been at Number Nineteen. Am I supposed to lecture on the perils of the Yoshiwara? Or—"

"The delegation from the States," Harrison said, "wish to be conducted personally about Tokyo. They know what they want to see. Drinking shops. Tea houses. The sort where girls are sent for. Everything, including the Yoshiwara. They intend to determine for themselves just how far fraternization has gone, and the general's made up his mind that you can show them the fewest seams. I'm damn glad," Harrison grunted, running a finger under his collar, a finger which came out wet, "that now you've taken that damn silly smile off your face."

Davies said, "What's wrong having a geisha pour your beer?"

"Tell it to the delegation."

Davies began to sweat also. "With important things to be done, everything stops while we try to hide what doesn't mean a thing? If a soldier gets a wallop out of having the bones picked out of boiled globefish with chopsticks by the maid who is squatted in front of him, what the hell? And if Joe makes a pass at her, which he does, and she giggles and wonders

what it'll be like when he gives her that formerly forbidden and immoral *kisu*, who's hurt? If—"

"Tell it to the delegation," said Harrison. "Convince 'em that Number Nineteen is only a restaurant. The general will decorate you for that. But if the delegation get the proof they're out to find, what you'll get from the C. O. is the Purple Heart." The Public Relations officer ended disgustedly, "He's stuck with the delegation, and so we've got to worry about fraternization when all hell is pulling in fifty directions to get control of Japan."

Davies nodded. He liked no part of what he was to do, but there was one bright spot about conducting the delegation around Tokyo; it seemed to Davies that some of the strange political organizations, learning that Americans from the States, obviously important, were making an investigation, would attempt to reach the ears of the investigators for their own purposes. If this happened, Davies would have a chance to pass along names to AMG and G-2, perhaps those of men who remained well out of sight in the struggle for control.

Much of what was going on politically, seemingly obvious, was below the surface in Davies' opinion. Japan was a rich prize, and there were many players in the grim game. The United States played in it also, but without marked cards, depending on a few men, of whom Davies was one, to keep the game straight.

"When does all this start?" asked Lew.

Major Harrison said, "The delegation is in the general's office."

"And the general," remarked Davies, "has important business elsewhere, just as his PRO did." He got off the desk. "And a staff officer has the job of keeping the visitors in good humor." Davies laughed; he said to the sergeant, "The way to get yourself in strong with a halfway pretty waitress, when there's competition, is to say, '*Moshi kanete orimasu.*' That's the polite way of making a request. She'll put a bigger piece of ice in your *birru*, Sergeant."

"Thank you, sir," the sergeant said. He picked up a pencil. "Would the major please repeat that slowly?"

"Officers are supposed to discourage fraternization," grumbled Harrison. "Now he'll want a pass to see if it works."

The sergeant said, "Yes, sir."

"You're a big help, Davies," the PRO sighed. "Why beat on me? I'm not the one who wished this on you. Lord, but it's hot!"

Davies said, "It may not be as bad as you think," although he was not speaking of the heat.

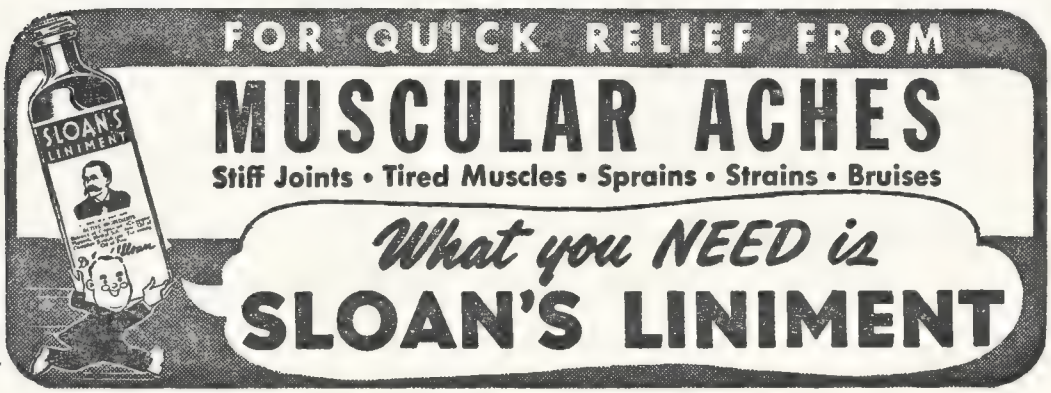
The fog seemed to be turning into steam. The light was a blend of lavender and gray, like fuming incense, and as hot as glowing incense in a brass container. But the odor was not that of highland Japanese pine nor Indian sandalwood nor Formosan jasmine. It was that of a bombed Japanese city in which many inhabitants lived in the open; it was an odor composed of low-tide mud, fish, condiments, cooking, and sweating garments.

"You wouldn't have the nerve," said Harrison, wiping his forehead, "to suggest to these men that they ought to go to the seacoast! I had a couple of days there. I slept like a rock." He sighed. "But I'd just as soon sweat here as sweat trying to satisfy those men anywhere."

"No seacoast," Lew said. "One of the advantages of being an Ainu is that your clothes don't amount to much. Nice in heat. If those investigators stick with me, they may blow a fuse before long."

Harrison warned, "If they get out of sorts, they may blow up the wrong way. I don't envy you." Quietly, the PRO said, "I needn't tell you how some people have been anxious to oust the C. O. because of his policies." Harrison picked up a paper and handed it to Davies. "I wouldn't say that this delegation is a hundred percent friendly to the Old Man."

Lew examined the list of names. "I wouldn't say so, either," he commented. Then he said, "I hope you get your pass, Sergeant," and, lighting another cigarette and nodding to Harrison, he started for the general's office.


FOR QUICK RELIEF FROM
MUSCULAR ACHES
Stiff Joints • Tired Muscles • Sprains • Strains • Bruises
What you NEED is
SLOAN'S LINIMENT
SLOAN'S LINIMENT

SEVEN men in civilian attire were waiting for him. One of the general's staff officers introduced them to Davies, and Lew acknowledged each introduction and did his best to associate names with faces and appearances. The elderly and pipe-smoking man was Hartshorn, the head of the delegation; the man of about the same age, standing near an open window, was Ashton, a Washington man who disapproved of the manner in which Japanese affairs were being handled by the C. O. and AMG; a younger fellow beside Ashton was the expert who would compile the delegation's report. These, Lew was reasonably certain, were the three to watch.

The youngest of the trio said, "Is it correct that you have been instructed to answer all questions frankly, Major Davies?"

"Yes, sir," agreed Lew.

Captain Martin said, "Major Davies is completely at your service, Mr. Malloy. And as the general explained earlier, Major Davies is thoroughly conversant with—ah—life in Tokyo."

Malloy whipped out a notebook and found a pencil. "What is your opinion of Tokyo life, Major? And what part do our boys take in it?"

"Life here is not yet normal," said Davies.

And make something of that, thought Lew. *Our boys! Nuts.* "Our men," he continued, not wanting to give the questioner a feeling that there was to be any evasion, "take little part in it, and, it seems to me, react in a normal manner."

"I am specifically referring to night life," Malloy prodded. "To be absolutely exact, to fraternization. How much is there of it?"

"Unless I have misunderstood my orders," said Davies, who had no intention of saying anything which could later become a damning statement, "that's what you are here to examine. My orders are to show you about."

The elderly Ashton remarked, "But how much will you show us? We want more than a handpicked tourists' tour." He went on smoothly, as if the coming question was to be innocent instead of being loaded, "Just how do you qualify for this assignment? Do you know the licensed district well, for example?"

"Yes," said Davies.

"Been there often?"

"I have, sir."

Ashton smiled with satisfaction. "I see," he said, while Malloy began to write in the notebook. "I see. Hmm. Now tell the delegation, Major, how you justify the military orders, such as were shown us, supposedly issued for the purpose of inducing our boys to keep away from the Yoshiwara, when officers such as yourself, you admit, actually engage in fraternization?"

"I don't believe it necessary for Major Davies to give opinions," said Hartshorn quietly.

The head of the delegation continued, "We are in your hands, Major, and depend on you for an honest insight as to what is going on in Tokyo. From what the general has said, you will give that to us."

"He'll make it possible to apply a coat of whitewash," snapped Ashton. "Suppose we let the major, who has agreed to answer questions with frankness, answer what I asked of him. If he intends to be frank. Well, what about it, Major Davies?"

Davies saw the misery on the staff officer's face. Few secrets had been guarded more closely than that of Llewelyn Davies' life as Koropok the Ainu, during which time he had served in the licensed district as an *hakoya,* the most degraded of all servants, at the famous Number Nineteen.

This was no time to fence, nor to come up with anything which might continue the questioning. The thing to do, Lew decided, was to go strictly GI and so he said levelly, "I carry out orders, sir. I do not justify them."

"That's what Hitler's generals said," remarked Malloy.

Lew's lips tightened; but as he controlled himself, and remained silent, he was thinking, *We're going to get along just fine.*

"Mr. Malloy," Hartshorn said wearily, as if similar bickering had worn him down, "you owe Major Davies an apology."

Malloy mumbled something. Ashton, before the unwilling apology was concluded, cut in to say, "I'll have no part of the investigation until I am satisfied we can depend on Major Davies conducting us to the proper places, and before I step foot in Tokyo I want him to state his qualifications. The general hedged about Davies' experience, stating that the major knows Tokyo. I want details. Speak up, Major." He added nastily, "Or are you under orders to keep silent?"

"Suppose we put it this way," said Davies; "you tell me exactly what you want to investigate, and I'll take you to the proper places."

Ashton demanded, "How'll we know you will do that? Why, there has been time to arrange things so that it will all look perfectly innocent when we arrive. For all I know, you've been in touch with the Japs at the places you'll take us, and when we get there all we'll see is one soldier drinking tea, instead of being corrupted by women, alcohol, and drugs."

"If I were Major Davies," said Captain Martin, opening and closing a hand, "I would resent what you have just said."

"The implication," Lew said quietly, "is that I would work with Japs against the good of my own country—"

Malloy broke in, "Isn't that what happens when our authorities attempt to interfere with what the mass of the people really want?"

"Food is what the mass of the people want," said Davies. "They'll vote on the side of the most rice." Staring squarely at Malloy, he went on, "Hidden forces are tugging at Japan, but I am a soldier and these are none of my business." *And let's hope you believe it, too!* After a pause, Lew said bluntly, "I have no interest in politics. I do know Tokyo. Do you wish me to take you around, or don't you?"

ASHTON leaned over and whispered a moment with Malloy, and, while Hartshorn was saying that the delegation as a whole surely were satisfied with the general's selection, Davies thought that he heard Ashton say something about a dumb soldier. A corner of Lew's mouth twitched; that was what the Japanese had thought regarding his intelligence when they had supposed him to be a stupid Ainu. He almost felt as if he were Koropok again.

What a portion of the delegation wanted was an honest check on fraternization; what another portion wanted was something to play the devil with the present form of occupational control. Ashton and Malloy were the leaders of the latter group. A belligerent pair who came close to dominating the others.

Davies was sick of it already. No wonder Harrison, the PRO, hadn't wanted to accept any responsibility for what Davies was to do; and that went for the general also. On the other hand, *The C. O. trusts me,* thought Lew, *and if I cheat every GI out of a bottle of beer, that makes me something, too.* Yes, this castor oil assignment was his, and he had to see to it that the delegation accepted him instead of some other officer who might well mess it up.

And it seemed reasonable to suppose, now that he saw another group of men near Hartshorn speaking together, that if Ashton were satisfied with him, thinking him to be only a dumb soldier, the others might not want him.

"Fraternization," said Davies, "is a funny word for what goes on, isn't it? The word refers to brothers; but we use it when a soldier and a girl become friendly." He grinned. "Sometimes I think that what is back of Japanese politics is the desire of unscrupulous men to make fortunes"—Ashton, Malloy, and another man nodded and agreed—"and of the people to simply get enough to eat"—and Hartshorn and everyone else nodded also—"and yet it looks terribly involved to us, who are trying to find something deep and Oriental."

Both sides agreed with the stocky officer, Hartshorn honestly, Ashton because he was now convinced that while Davies might attempt a whitewash of conditions, the major was really a fool and could be managed.

"Let's have an understanding," said Ashton, smiling. "You, Major Davies, are to take us where soldiers are entertained, on which we

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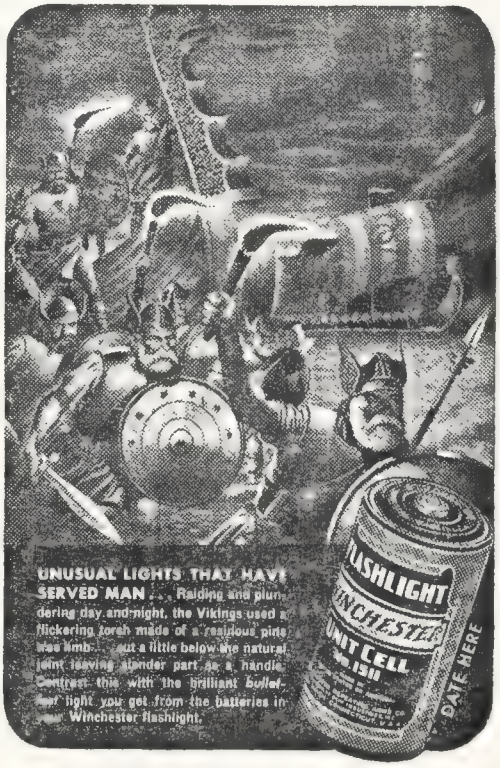
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are to report at home. If an effort is being made by the Japanese to influence our boys toward Japan, or against any of our allies, we want this shown by permitting us to examine soldiers we will find where you take us. If our soldiers, and more particularly officers, indicate any bias toward any of our allies, which they pass on to the Japanese in order that elections are influenced, we intend to investigate that also. If—"

Hartshorn said, "Must we go over that again, Mr. Ashton? The purpose of the investigation is only to examine fraternizing. We—"

This time Lew broke in with, "Gentlemen, it is going to be hotter as the morning becomes later. There are some places to which we can go right now." He turned to the staff officer. "Do we rate cars, Captain? O. K. That's something. I—"

"Major," said Ashton, "you haven't answered me."

Davies said, "What you were saying is too complicated for a soldier, sir. It's hot enough without having to think how to reply."

"Just one thing before we go," Malloy remarked. "Are these unscrupulous men you mention, who are making fortunes at the people's expense, men who sit in with AMG and the occupational authorities?"

He can't think I'm that dumb, Davies was sure. And so he said, "Even if I knew the answer, you wouldn't expect me to say anything, would you?"

"Do you know the answer?" asked Malloy.

"Quite frankly," Davies said placidly, "I don't." He continued in fluent Japanese, *"Todai moto kurashi."*

"What's that mean?"

"Just below the candlestick is the darkest place of all. It's a proverb which means that a man must be at a distance in order to see what really goes on. As far as what is happening in Tokyo, I expect I'm too close to everything. You gentlemen will doubtless have a better perspective. I—"

Ashton said thoughtfully, "You are very good at evading simple questions, Major Davies. The question was, 'Do wealthy Japanese influence our conduct in supervising the government of Japan?' "

"The answer," said Lew, "is no. But there is another proverb which may operate in Japan as it does elsewhere. *Jigoku no sata mo kane shidai.* Even hell's judgments may be swayed by money."

Malloy said, "Where did you learn to speak Japanese?"

"That is a purely personal question," said Captain Martin.

Ashton, frowning, insisted, "When we go to wherever you take us, Major, I want you to speak in English whenever possible. And when we question any of our boys in teahouses, you are to stand back and remain silent. We do not want their replies to be influenced by your presence."

Lew guessed he had better start polishing his brass, to have it ready when the pair questioned GI's who might be full of beer.

Some fun, thought Davies. And in the meantime his own work would stand still, unless Ashton and Malloy were approached by men who thought as they did, or by Japanese who, for purposes of their own, put on such a cloak. Yes, Japan reeked with plot and counterplot, and scoundrels plotted for gain along with the ideologists. Yes, in Tokyo had collected the scum and scour of the Asiatic gutters, while ranged against them stood a handful of men, including Llewelyn Davies.

"Ready, gentlemen?" he asked.

CHAPTER II

THE FALSE HAKOYA

THE ride toward the licensed quarter was not an agreeable one. Davies, seated with Hartshorn and Ashton, in the staff car's rear seat, tried to explain a little about Tokyo, not as a guide but to underline the strangeness of Oriental thinking and habits, and to prepare the men for the differences between America and Asia. Hartshorn was keenly interested, but Ashton cut off Lew's telling of how Japanese, bombed out of their homes, continued to go in the evenings to the city's outskirts for *mushi-kiki,* the-listening-to-sing-insects, and for *tsuki-mi,* summer-moonlight-viewing. Ashton said that such foolishness had better be beaten out of the Japs. Learning something about their rights would be better for them, and the occupational authorities were remiss in not showing the people that adherence to old customs was an easy way to keep men and women in subjugation. That was what Hirohito had done. But this certainly was going to be changed.

After that, Davies remained silent.

But when the Yoshiwara was in sight, he said, "The tree which you see, outside the entrance gate, is called *mikaeri yanagi.* The look-back willow. Formerly, when a girl, because of her debts to whoever owned her, could not leave the district, she would go as far as the gate with her lover, and when he left her he would walk to the tree and then turn and look back to see her once more. The Japanese," said Lew, "look at . . . fraternization . . . differently than do we. I mention this because, often, Japanese men come here for ordinary entertainment, dancing, singing, maybe drinking, and not for—"

"I intend to examine certain phases of prostitution also," announced Ashton in a sharp

voice. "For example, did the girls here have the opportunity to vote? Were they given the chance to hear all sides? Or were they herded to the polls to help uphold the present system? It is not my intention," he orated, as the driver of the staff car began to slow down at the Great Gate, and then stopped, "to permit these unfortunate women to be further exploited—"

A wrinkled vendor of shaved ice attempted to sidle up to the visiting Amerika-jin.

"I thought it was our soldiers in whom you were interested," said Hartshorn in an amused voice. He went on with sudden crispness, "Please do not make a speech. I am certain there are none of your constituents here. I am not one, and, unless my feeling is incorrect, I doubt whether Major Davies would vote for you."

"Naturally not," retorted Ashton. "He's an officer."

Hartshorn sighed. "I early came to the conclusion," he said, "that the major has seen through you, Mr. Ashton, and that he is well aware that your interest is not so much in the avowed purpose of this delegation, which is

the examination of fraternization, as it is in the political situation."

"I am not interested in the opinions of majors," said Ashton. "I am interested solely in what our boys think. If—"

"This is where we get out," said Davies quickly, returning the salutes of the pair of M. P.'s and the Japanese police near the gate. He glanced around and, when he did, and saw that the machine containing the remainder of the delegation turned the corner, he stepped out of the car.

If the interior had been hot and stuffy, the air outside seemed to writhe with heat vibrations, on which were carried the minor jangle of stringed instruments as geisha plucked at them, and the tap of drums. The latter were like pulsing heartbeats, eager and compelling and throbbing. Real or imaginary, perfume seemed to be in the quivering air and to have replaced the city odors.

A wrinkled vendor of shaved ice flavored with vanilla attempted to sidle up to these visiting *Amerika-jin* who would have money and thirst; one of the solemn-faced Japanese policemen stopped him.

"Let him come," ordered Ashton. "He has a right to make a living."

The M. P. glanced at Davies, who nodded assent.

"*Yoroshii,*" the M. P. gave permission.

The Japanese shuffled up to the group. Ashton spoke to him, forced to shout because of the din set up by rival stallkeepers in praise of their wares. Holding out his hand, Ashton said, "Me you friendee."

The vendor blinked.

"You talkee to me. Me not letee soldier hurtee you. Me bossee man. You sabbee?" With this explanation, of which the vendor understood no word, Ashton went on, "Me thinkee you hatee emperor who makee you workee too hardee."

When the old vendor merely continued to hold forth his tray, Malloy said, "Perhaps he doesn't know any English at all, Chief."

"Everybody in the Orient understands that sort of talk," grumbled Ashton. "He is afraid to tell me what he thinks, with the military around."

The vendor, deciding that the crazy *Amerika-jin* had no intention of making any purchase, began to back away toward the willow's shade, where he kept the covered pail containing the chunks of ice which he shaved when he saw likely customers arriving at the gate. As he backed off, not neglecting to bow courteously to the M. P.'s and the Japanese policemen, he muttered something.

Ignoring Davies, Ashton asked an M. P., "What'd he say?"

The soldier said to Davies, "Does the major wish me to repeat it?"

"The major has nothing to say about it," said Ashton; and the soldier, in the moment before Davies nodded, with his own face absolutely blank, guessed that Brass had plenty of troubles of their own these days. "Speak up," ordered Ashton. "What did the poor old fellow say?"

"He said," the M. P. began, while his companion on guard duty looked away in a hurry, "that you say '*ee, ee, ee,*' as if you were a . . . as if you were howling because a man was throwing rocks at you."

"Nonsense," stated Ashton. When he saw the smiles on his fellow delegates' faces, he fumed to Davies, "Look here, Major, aren't you going to correct the attitude of this soldier? Such a remark calls for disciplining, and—"

"The omitted word," said Lew placidly, "was female dog."

One of the delegation laughed; another said, "You asked for it, Ashton. You'd better take lessons in Japanese, or rely on an interpreter."

Malloy sprang to Ashton's defense. "How do we know that either the soldier or the officer translated correctly?"

"I didn't," said Lew solemnly, "and I'm sorry." *And I've got this coming, too,* he told himself, not solemnly at all, as he decided what to say next. "I erred in translation. Female dog wasn't the word. It was—"

"That'll do," shouted Ashton; and from the glance which he shot at Davies, as almost all of the others were laughing, Lew knew that now he had made a personal enemy in place of the previous impersonal one. But he was satisfied to have it so, because Ashton's importance to the other men in the delegation had been cut down. "How long do we stand here waiting?" Ashton asked shrilly, his face more red and flushed than even Tokyo heat warranted.

DAVIES felt much better as he led the way through the gate and into Nakanocho, the broad middle street, on which could be seen no signs of visitors, either Americans or Japanese. He did not intend to take his party to a guide-house, the usual custom, where arrangements should be made to visit Number Nineteen or any of the other houses of entertainment; Americans, including an Army officer, were not expected to follow polite routine, which began with tea and cakes and the engaging of dancing girls, with the final geisha not seen unless *najimi-kin,* the payment of intimacy money, allowed her to sip tea or sake and also watch the maids whose single task was to dance and serve.

And Davies was keenly amused at the idea of returning to Number Nineteen as an honored, at least outwardly, guest. At Nineteen he had been the *hakoya* always given the dirtiest

of jobs. But at Nineteen, frequented by high officials who came for entertainment and Scotch brought in from Singapore, he had picked up those sometimes fragile threads which later he had been able to weave into an understandable dangerous pattern, and then do something to thwart what the Japanese intended.

He thought briefly, as he walked and explained the district automatically, of Suriga, the manager of Nineteen, and of the weight of Suriga's foot and the expertness with which the fat little Nip had planted it where it hurt the most. The Jap had not been sadistic. He never kicked Koropok unless there was an audience, and he did it then because the audience enjoyed seeing the degradation of an Ainu pariah. He did it because it brought profit to Nineteen.

The round-faced manager had been spoken to, but not in such a way as to cause him to believe that he was singled out from the other house managers. Davies, knowing the type of Japanese who had visited Number Nineteen, had seen to it that Nineteen was kept under surveillance, although not obviously. He had doubted from the start whether anything would come of it; Suriga was a clever little devil interested in only one thing, profit, whether it be in yen or dollars.

He was half smiling to himself, recalling his kennel in Nineteen, where he had slept only when there were no duties, which was seldom, and comparing it to orange juice and coffee after his morning shower . . .

"I see some of our boys down that street," said Malloy. "Are you trying to prevent us from seeing what is going on there?"

Davies knew what it was before he turned his head. He knew exactly what was of interest to the GI's, and, without speaking, led the delegation off the Middle Street, Nakanocho. There had been a flurry when places such as the soldiers were examining had been closed; it had something to do with soldier-officer discrimination because of price differences, Davies remembered vaguely, although this wasn't anything even distantly related to his work in Tokyo. Probably a complaint to the States, and the resultant moans, had changed the original order.

The structures on the side street within the Yoshiwara were European in design and were two-storied. The first series of buildings which the delegation passed or paused before were fenced with bamboo, with photographs of the girls displayed behind the fence, each moon face framed in gold and marked with the geisha name of the particular girl. All had the proper geisha prefixes of "young" or "little" by means of which geisha could always be identified. There was Wakayuki, Young Lucky, and Wakakoma, Young Filly, and Ko-tei, Little Docile, and Ko-hiro, Little Wide Spreading. There was even Wakakiyo, which honored the

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geisha with the name of Young Pure, in case anyone could believe that.

At the end of each fenced building was the booking office, with a Japanese behind the open window, and Davies noted that where the prices had formerly been one, two, or five yen, there was certainly inflation now.

Beyond these picture houses were the showrooms, and it was in front of the lattice fronted places that the soldiers were gathered, orderly and grinning. Inside of the showrooms were girls, dressed in red and purple, and seated in rows as they displayed their charms to prospective customers. Some smoked long thin pipes, others the cigarettes which had been passed in to them. Their black and shining hair, the color of licorice, was arranged in fantastic fashion, and ornamented with silver bell-like pendants and paper flowers. Heavy perfume

Inside of the showrooms were girls, seated in rows as they displayed their charms to prospective customers.

swayed out from the showrooms. Some of the girls piped the words they had learned, "How you do?" and "You want *kisu?*" and "You rike me?" while their thickly powdered faces remained blank, dull, and expressionless. Where sweat had trickled down, there were streaks on the brown lustreless skin beneath.

Ashton said savagely, "I have never seen anything more disgusting. Major Davies, order those men back to their barracks."

"I think we'd better not interfere," said Hartshorn.

"If the major refuses to do it," Ashton snapped, when Davies lit a cigarette and had not spoken, "and you have no interest in protecting our boys, I'll talk to them myself. I would be remiss in my duty to their mothers if I did not."

Davies said, "They all look as if they could take care of themselves, Mr. Ashton. They are behaving. They are getting a kick out of staring at the girls, but you haven't seen any of 'em go in, have you? If—"

Ashton had already walked over to the first

group of GI's. "Fellows," he began, "this isn't why you came to Japan. This isn't why—"

"Who says so?" broke in a soldier. He was about to continue when a companion nudged him, and the soldier's eyes shifted so that he saw a major. He shrugged; he turned away as he said something.

"What did you say?" demanded Ashton, near enough to have caught something of the words. "Repeat that, young man!"

Davies said wearily, "You needn't repeat anything, soldier." He strode over to Ashton, "I must ask you not to go beyond your purpose here, Mr. Ashton. You are to investigate and to question, but orders"—Lew's voice sharpened, and he guessed he was being bothered by heat too—"are out."

"This is the second time you have interfered with us," said Malloy.

And the third time, thought Davies, *you rate a punch on the nose.*

He remained silent again, however; and by now he gave over the idea that perhaps something more than acting as guide might result from conducting the party around the city. He was too disgusted to care, either.

"We have seen this phase," said Hartshorn. "Let us go on, Major."

Lew turned abruptly and led the way back to Middle Street. What damned foolishness, in Nineteen, would come next?

WHERE Number Nineteen, in Japanese style, was located, it was hot as elsewhere, a harsh Tokyo heat; but it was cleaner than on the side street of picture houses and showrooms, and more quiet. The way was familiar to Davies, although it was strange to be walking to Nineteen, where the red lanterns hung, as a free man instead of shambling up toward it as a tattered and filthy Ainu pariah. And it was even more strange, on entering Number Nineteen, to be welcomed by bowing, smiling maids, and to be directed to the principal guest room into which the manager, fat Suriga, came breathlessly.

He smiled all over his face, and bowed, and said, "Oh! Ssso prenty geisha! Oh! Scotchu whisuky! Oh! Prease down sssit!"

Every time Suriga bowed, which was with every sentence, Davies wanted to kick him. And when the manager hissed, *"Oshii koto ni wa . . .* it is a pity that we are to be subjected to the illiteracies of these pigs," to the woman in charge of the geisha of the house, "and we will offer them the least attractive girls," he managed to keep his face straight.

"Do you speak English?" asked Malloy.

"Oh! Yesss!"

"We are supposed to sit down," Davies suggested.

Ashton said, "I have no intention of sitting down. I am here as an investigator, not as a profligate."

"Suit yourself," said Lew. He sat, at once, on a soft *futon* in the bare room, and all of the delegation, smiling at their clumsiness, followed his example; all save Ashton and Malloy. "If you want to learn anything," Davies added, "it will come only if you at least put up a pretense that you are not antagonistic. But, as I said, that is up to you."

Hartshorn remarked, "There is a good deal we want to learn, Major Davies, and I, for one, am listening to you."

Plucked *samisen* told Davies that girls were practicing or entertaining. He heard singing—

"Iya no o-kata no
Shinetsu yori ka
Suita o-kata no
Mura ga yoi."

—and guessed that the singer, certainly, had been engaged, because the words of the song assured the listener that better than the kindness of the disliked was the violence of the beloved.

New pale green mats were on the floor, flowers had been carefully arranged in a low bowl, and a valuable painting, one Davies had not seen when he had been at Nineteen, hung against the alcove wall; Nineteen must be prosperous. And the thirteen-year-old serving maids who padded into the room, one with a tea set and the other with sake and sake cups, were both finely attired.

The maids paused on entering the room, and, trays in hand, docilely glanced at Suriga. He blinked momentarily, and then called, *"Kore wa do iu imi de gozaimasho? Hakoya! Mo yoroshii ka!"* but without any of the venom in his voice such as Davies, as Koropok, had heard if he had formerly been only half as slow as was the present *hakoya* in placing the stands about for the guests' bowls and cups.

Maybe there's a union now, thought Davies. *Maybe managers don't kick hakoyas around.* He thought briefly of telling this to the delegation, but again didn't care what interpretation they put on anything, although he wanted to give Hartshorn and the other honest delegates whatever break he could.

He began to explain the procedure in Nineteen as Malloy shot a first question at the manager, concerning the number of soldiers and officers who came to Nineteen; he kept on talking until the *hakoya* arrived and went to the corner where the little lacquered stands were nested; and then he talked automatically, unhearing of an expressed wish from Ashton that he be still.

This is the damndest thing I've seen yet, thought Davies. ***Who says Suriga is dumb? He's one smart Nip.***

The *hakoya* of Number Nineteen, whose arrival had brought Davies up short, was a stocky, broad-shouldered, bearded man of about Davies' height, and as swarthy as Lew. And the *hakoya,* although in no such rags as had hung about Koropok during his service at Nineteen, was certainly not a Japanese.

Suriga's hired himself another Ainu, Davies could see. *Somebody who's cheap, and easy to kick around.*

He paid no attention to the questioning; it was just what he expected it would be. But it was fascinating to observe the *hakoya,* whose clumsiness was so different in every way from Japanese deftness, and to think, *That's how I must have acted and looked when I was Koropok here.*

Unable to keep silent, Davies said, "Have you gentlemen ever seen an Ainu? The man putting the stands down for you is one. A pariah. He—"

"There is no such thing as caste in Japan now," interrupted Ashton. He stared at the *hakoya.* "Why, he's a white man!"

"An Ainu," corrected Lew. "One of the original inhabitants of Japan, his ancestors were." Davies, of all the men in the reception room, sensed Suriga's interest in what Ashton had said, and wondered whether he himself had imagined that a hasty glance had gone from master to servant. His own eyes began to appraise the *hakoya;* he bit down a greeting in Ainu, or in the clipped Japanese which the pariahs spoke, because while an American officer could explain being able to speak in Japanese, it was doubtful if anyone in Japan believed that any American officer was conversant with the language or dialect of the pariahs.

IT TOOK Davies a long moment before he truly realized so simple a fact that as far as Suriga was concerned, who had been Koropok's master, whatever an officer of Davies' rank might do would only result in bows.

He said, speaking for the first time in Japanese, "*Sono inu wa nan' to iu?* Has the dog a name?" and addressing the fat manager.

"*Nihon wo go-zanji desu ka?* You speak Japanese?"

Davies said, "Of course I speak Japanese. How else could I serve as guide for this honorable and important delegation?"

"Oh, then perhaps you will inform me why they are here? Do they desire whisky? Girls? What is the purpose of the honorable visit?"

Davies didn't blame Suriga for being confused. He said, "They desire certain information. This they will obtain through your answers to me. As for myself," Lew went on, "I am curious as to why a pariah serves you."

Suriga giggled. "During the war," he replied, "I engaged as *hakoya,* and cheaply, an Ainu who was called Koropok, and he was a very good servant if you kicked a little speed into him. This one," said the manager, "has the name of Hokuyak, and by hiring him I show my desire to accede to the recommendation from the authorities that pariahs be afforded an opportunity to earn a living."

He bowed after making the statement.

Hokuyak stumbled over a stand which he had already placed down, upsetting the short-necked bottle of sake which a maid had set on it; Davies waited for the torrent of invective which should have followed, but Suriga's reprimand was mild. As Davies wondered about that, he also began to wonder whether the bearded *hakoya* had stumbled because he had been engaged in listening.

"He is very clumsy," said Davies.

"He has been ill," Suriga said, "and, as you know, honorable Major, it is now forbidden to beat the pariahs."

Davies smiled; he knew this, and he knew a good deal more concerning the Ainus and their customs. So he asked, half turning away as if uninterested in what Suriga might reply, "Was he very sick?"

"I feared he would die," admitted Suriga. "Had he died, what a horrible cost I would have been burdened with! But last week, when other medicines failed, I caused him to be treated with expensive *moxa*"—the wily manager was doing his best to curry favor with fool Americans who were interested in pariahs—"just as if he were a profitable maid. As you can see, he is now well again."

One way or another, decided Lew, although he nodded, *you're a liar. If the man is an Ainu, he would refuse to work, after being sick, until he had seen two full moons cross the sky. If he isn't an Ainu, what's going on?*

Now alert, Davies appeared utterly uninterested. He squatted on the nearest *futon* and took the bowl of sake which was handed him. Then, as he heard Suriga order the *hakoya* back to his other duties, something which Hokuyak should have learned in his first day at Nineteen, he said, "*Nesan! Biiru ippon motte kite o kure,*" because cold beer was preferable to tepid rice wine.

Ashton said, "What'd you just say? I hope you've told the Jap that the Ainu is a man just as we are."

Maybe he is, agreed Davies to himself; and there came to him the notion that as this bearded servant reached the doorway to the long corridor that the fellow half paused, as if he might be listening.

Davies had already made up his mind that he wanted a check on a pariah who was named Hokuyak; he changed his mind about a delay, and, leaning forward so the maid could light

Hokuyak stumbled over a stand, upsetting a short-necked bottle of sake—but Suriga's reprimand was mild.

his cigarette, said, "I wish to speak to the *hakoya.*"

"He is very stupid," stuttered Suriga. A pucker of worry appeared between the manager's eyes as he was undoubtedly trying to figure out a better refusal, all of which was being complicated, to Davies' secret amusement, by the fact that the *hakoya* had not hurried away.

"These gentlemen," smiled Lew disarmingly, "desire to hear from a former pariah something regarding his treatment by a Japanese, yourself."

The pucker disappeared and Suriga's face became bland again. Davies was pretty sure that Suriga almost sighed with relief as the manager told his servant Hokuyak to reply truthfully to whatever the honorable officer-*san* asked of him.

"*Hakoya,*" said the man who had been Koropok, "were you very sick?"

"What're you asking him?" demanded Malloy.

Davies explained patiently, "About his health," and waited, while the maid who had returned with his bottle of beer uncapped it and poured it into his glass, for the swarthy, bearded man's reply.

It came gutturally and slowly. "*Wak'r'mas'.*" The black-visaged hakoya spoke in clipped Ainu-fashion when saying that he did not understand.

Hmm, thought Davies. *Maybe he is an Ainu, and ducked the question because it's unlucky, according to the Ainus, to mention illness.* There was another way to get at what had aroused Lew's doubts. He said, "*Moxa itande iru?* Was the application of *moxa* painful to you? Did you cry with pain?"

MALLOY asked, "Now what's being said?" and that, Davies guessed, was asked because Malloy wanted to record it all in the notebook. Treatment of pariahs did not come within the scope of the investigation of fraternization, but Lew had found out that Ashton and Malloy had other interests, and how the Ainus were being treated in Japan, particularly if the treatment were such that they could beat on the C. O. about it, was something they wouldn't pass up.

"I asked him how he was treated when he was sick," said Lew.

Ashton wanted to know, "And how was he treated?"

Davies saw that the word, now, referred to the manner in which the *hakoya* had been cared for, and not to actual medical treatment; but he chose to misunderstand. He took a swallow of beer, glanced at the unlabeled bottle, decided that it tasted like fine Dutch beer, took another provokingly deliberate draught, and then began, "When other remedies failed" —Davies did not intend to voice his doubts— "*moxa* was applied as a remedy, and—"

"What's *moxa?*"

"A cautery," said Davies. "The word has become an English one. Properly, in original Japanese, it was *mogusa,* contracted to *moxa. Mogusa* translates into 'fiery herb' or 'burning herb.' Bits of the herb are rolled together to form a crude cone, which is applied to the back or the backs of the legs, and then lit. *Moxa* is said, by the Japanese, to be a cure for all human ailments. The manager of Nineteen," Lew said, just in case Suriga understood enough English to know what was being said, or if there should be anything to Davies' doubts about the bearded *hakoya,* "paid for this costly form of treatment."

Ashton frowned. "Why this sudden interest in something far from what you have been ordered to do for us?" and Davies believed that Ashton's ire had risen after his question concerning the Ainu's treatment had drawn a blank, instead of another opportunity to needle the occupation authorities. "What makes you so curious about a servant, anyhow?"

Davies saw, or thought he saw, a flicker in the *hakoya's* deepest dark eyes, a corresponding one in Suriga's, as if the manager understood the simple English of the question. Lew's irritation rose to anger. He half wished that he hadn't started to check on the *hakoya;* on the other hand, he dared not stop now, if there were really anything fraudulent about the pariah.

He said the obvious thing, ignoring the interruption, and spoke sharply. "Let me see the scar, *hakoya!*"

And if there isn't one, Davies said to himself, *the M. P.'s can come and get a pair of liars, right here and now.*

But, almost to Lew's surprise, there was a scar, the mark left by the burning of *moxa.* And it was a fresh one, too, although on the servant's chest instead of on the back. As a matter of fact there were several scars, all burned on the skin at the same time, and, as Davies stared at the fresh and angry cicatrices, they seemed to writhe into the shape of an insect instead of being separate and distinct scars. But this could have been caused by burning herb-fragments dropping from the smolder of the cones of *moxa.* Even so, Lew believed that his eyes were tracing out the long slender body and the mandibles of an insect . . .

"Such barbarous treatment must be ended," stated Ashton. "Make a note, Malloy, to remind me to ask the general why it hasn't been done already. Or," he continued, "has the major fooled us? Was the poor fellow actually tortured?"

Davies forced himself to stop wondering about master and servant. He wanted to save the C. O. from more nonsense; he asked, "For what?"

Malloy suggested, "Possibly to make him vote as his master wanted him to vote at the elections."

"Now I've heard everything," said Lew.

Davies was so utterly disgusted that as he picked up his glass he thought, *To hell with the whole business.* Lord, but it was hot! Why get worked up? The general could take care of himself. If a pair of idiots wanted to turn an investigation of fraternization into heaven knew what, was it Davies' affair? If Suriga hired a pariah, as Koropok had been hired, that

was Suriga's business. And if the man named Hokuyak worked so cheaply that Suriga was willing to spend good money on *moxa*, why should Llewelyn Davies give a damn? And if the doctor who had applied the burning herb had been so careless that the scar looked like a bug, that wasn't anything to get excited over, either.

The payoff was that Ashton and Malloy believed Suriga had the slightest interest in politics. Suriga thought of one thing, and one only. Money. Gold. Silver. Yen. Dollars. And the shrewd Jap got them, too.

Davies told himself, *Stop looking for trouble,* but that demand couldn't explain away his suspicions about the manager of Nineteen and his *hakoya.*

HARTSHORN tried to start the investigation. "Major Davies," he said, "find out how many soldiers come here, on the average, during a week, and how much money is spent, and particularly whether soldiers meet these girls elsewhere on—ah—companionable grounds . . ."

As the delegation's head continued explaining what he wanted to know regarding fraternization, Davies saw that the scarred *hakoya* turned as if to go. *As if he knows he won't be asked another question,* decided Lew. *And if that's true, he understands English.*

Davies, in spite of his having had enough of the affair, stopped the departure of the squat, bearded servant with, *"Dochira ye irasshaimasu?* Where are you going? Were you given permission to leave?"

He does a pretty fair job of acting like an Ainu, thought Lew, as the *hakoya* stood with hanging head. *But I did a better job. I wouldn't have stopped until my master, Suriga, gave me the order. He's a phony!*

Taking a refreshing swallow of beer, which was cool and good, Davies remarked, "This is fine beer, Suriga. Where was it stolen from? Java? Sumatra?"

Davies knew that he had two fish on his line; he was trying to play them both at the same time, and yet not let either think the hooks had been swallowed; and he had to handle the delegation at the same time also.

"I bought it from a man," said Suriga. "It is my desire to serve the guests of this house with the finest of everything." He bowed. "May the *hakoya* go about his duties now, officer-*san?*"

"In a moment," Davies agreed. *Anxious to get him away?* wondered Lew. *Afraid he is showing too much interest?* He faced the stocky servant. *"Hakoya,"* he asked without a change in his voice, "do you live in a pariah village here in Tokyo?"

Hokuyak said, "No."

Smiling, Davies drained the last of the beer, and waited for the maid to pour the liquid remaining in the bottle into his glass.

"You desire the records of this house?" suggested Suriga. "I will furnish them gladly, officer-*san,* in order that your gentlemen can see who comes here."

Davies gave no sign that the manager of Nineteen had not only revealed that he certainly had learned enough English, since the occupation of Japan, to understand Hartshorn's request for information, but also that the fat, shrewd Suriga wanted to put an end to the questioning of his servant. Why?

"Thank you," Lew nodded. He went on placidly, "This is indeed splendid beer." He was lifting the refilled glass, as if about to drink, when he shot at the scarred Hokuyak, "Quickly! Where is your home?" and, before the *hakoya,* if he were an Ainu, could have done more than pull his wits together, the American had jumped up and grabbed the man by his short kimono. "Speak!"

The bearded lips had tightened, instead of going lax with fear; one of the servant's hands had involuntarily moved to tear the American's hand away.

Suriga said hastily, "He comes from Ikadebetsu," and Davies was reasonably certain that the manager, to avert trouble, had blurted what might be the truth. "Oh, he is a very stupid servant, and illy trained," apologized Suriga. "Do not punish him, officer-*san!* Hokuyak! Dog! Apologize to the *danna-san* for your stupidity. Oh, you have disgraced this house! Apologize!"

The *hakoya* muttered something which Davies accepted; and then Lew was aware of what Ashton was saying, "I intend to report your action, Major Davies, and I intend to ask your commanding officer to have you replaced. Don't attempt to dissuade me, Hartshorn! I've seen enough to know that the major is entirely unsympathetic wih unfortunate people. After seeing how he has acted with an Ainu, I can well imagine how he must be with soldiers under his command. I am," said Ashton, "a fair man. I am giving you a chance, here and now, Major Davies, to explain, if you can, your amazing conduct. What have you to say?"

Ikadebetsu, Lew was thinking. *That's in Hokkaido, probably, because "betsu" is the Ainu word for "river". Did this battling Ainu, who isn't one, come to Tokyo by way of Ikadebetsu? And what's he doing at Nineteen?*

Whatever it was, so far as it concerned Suriga, money would be involved, and not politics. Were the pair working together, each for his own purpose? That was a possibility. Or was the imitation pariah one of the vultures who had swooped down here to do some profitable scavenging, as others were doing, gamblers, procurers, pimps, swindlers, gathering from the corners of Asia, from Macao, Hong-Kong,

Manila, from Vladivostok and Nanking and Calcutta? And what about the mark of the *moxa* . . . the scar burned, and not completely healed, on the *hakoya's* chest which looked like an insect. What insect? A scorpion?

"Did you hear what I said?" insisted Ashton.

"Why, yes," said Lew mildly; and he had heard it, too. "I'm sorry, sir. I was thinking about something else."

MALLOY, having done some savage writing in the notebook, looked up to where Davies was standing. "You have given us no cooperation," he remarked. "I now realize the difficulties of investigation, and what is wrong with our occupation where the military refuse to relinquish control. And yet I venture to say, gentlemen, that an officer of a People's Army would have accorded us better treatment, although we continue to refuse to allow our allies a hand in governing Japan—"

"We'll stick to fraternization," Hartshorn broke in; but when he glanced at the major it was not happily, but as if the officer had let him down.

Major Davies' thoughts had been far from GI's drinking beer with Nip geishas; he asked Suriga, "Have other servants been sick here? Was it necessary to apply the *moxa* to anyone else?"

"Not to anyone," said the manager, smiling broadly and showing every tooth in his head. "Oh, no! Ask them, officer-*san!*"

Why are you so pleased? wondered Lew. *Because it didn't cost you money? Or because I'd get excited if I saw more Nips with scars on their chests?*

Then he asked, "And yourself, honorable manager?"

He saw the infinitesimal veiling of Suriga's eyes, and the shifting of feet as the manager sought to stop the tensing of his pudgy body. What the *hakoya* Hokuyak might have done in revealing himself, if the man did anything, was beyond Davies' vision; but now Lew believed that the unscrupulous manager of Number Nineteen, beneath his fine silks, was branded with the scars of *moxa.*

If I say, "Let me see," he will say that he has been sick, Lew thought, *but he will say nothing, Jap-fashion, unless I press for an answer.*

This Davies did not do. The pair were suspicious, but could argue themselves out of their suspicions if the American seemed too stupid to follow up what had happened. Nor did Davies want to bring matters to a head, not until he knew, for example, what the mark meant; what he did want was to start checking, although certainly not here. And he wanted to get away, and do it without exciting the pair again.

He knew how to do this.

"Gentlemen," said Davies, "I regret that I have lost your confidence—"

"If you ever had it," Malloy said.

"And another officer will take my place," continued Lew. He stopped, picked up the glass of warming beer, and finished it. Headquarters wasn't going to like this. Not any part of it. Even so, and while Hartshorn was saying that after all it was not entirely the major's fault and that he himself disliked trouble, Davies smiled and said, "Good morning, gentlemen."

He returned Suriga's bow politely. Hokuyak, just inside the doorway, stepped aside to let the American pass. Davies did not glance at the other. He was completely satisfied, because the *hakoyo* had moved without an order from the manager, that the squat, bearded man was not an Ainu.

In the corridor, a soldier was being pulled back into one of the rooms by another GI. When the soldier saw Davies, he shouted, "Ye damn dirty yella devil! What ye doin' in uniform? Get out'f it!"

"Sir," said his companion, "he's seein' things."

"Look't his face," the soldier yelled. "Look't his hair. Yella!"

The black-haired Davies said, "Stick to beer, soldier."

The loud words brought not only Suriga but several of the delegation into the corridor.

"Yes, sir," promised the excited soldier's companion. "From now on, it'll be nothin' but beer, sir."

"Too much sake socks you," Davies said.

"It wasn't sake, sir. We was tryin'—"

Suriga had sidled between soldiers and officer. "Nice eat-somesing," he said to the soldiers. "Nice tea. *Ssssss!* Nice sreep on bed? Oh, yesss!"

Davies turned and was gone before any of the delegation could start questioning him about anything. He had a question of his own to ask of the proper person. More, he had his first real inkling of what might be going on.

If he were correct about it, the presence of the imitation pariah made sense; and if the fellow who called himself Hokuyak was convinced that the American knew what was going on, Davies, who knew the vultures of the Orient, had every reason to believe that he himself would get a knife in the back.

CHAPTER III

A BREAK IN THE WEB

IT was a strange city, Sapporo in Hokkaido, more like an American city than Japanese, for there were wide avenues, tree lined, and granite and solid brick buildings, and well kept parks. And while there were the

customary things found in small Japanese cities, the Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples and inevitable eating shops, and the filthy huddle of squalid Ainu hovels on the outskirts, on this north island where the majority of the pariahs now lived, Sapporo was dominated by an enormous brewery. Major Davies, in his comfortable breezy room in the Occidental-style hotel, could see the brewery buildings, and the tall chimneys there, of brick, cut across his vision of the hills in which the Ainus also lived, those not needed by the Japanese to bury their dead, mend footwear, and slaughter animals for Japanese consumption.

Behind the first hills were the grim forested mountain fastnesses where a few of the sturdiest Ainus remained, partially free unless their conquerors centuries ago had use for them. The town of Ikadebetsu was somewhere in those peaks, in what amounted to a tiny pocket, a sort of trading place, but without sufficient land on which even a Japanese could tear out a living.

In front of the hills was a rich and magnificent plain, where Lew could see, a little beyond Sapporo, the poles of hop-fields.

Even after Japan's surrender, Sapporo was a busy place. Sawmills were engaged in turning out lumber for flattened Tokyo; the brewery was taxed to capacity in an effort to keep up with GI thirsts in the hot season. After the stagnation of Tokyo, Davies enjoyed watching activity, just as he was enjoying the glass of beer which he had ordered on reaching his room.

He was in uniform. The room had been reserved for an AMG officer—which Davies was not, although papers and charts from the bag he opened seemed to indicate that he was. The second bag, unopened, contained clothes, although an offer from a housemaid to open it and arrange his clothes in the closet had been refused politely.

The hotel management knew that Major Davies had come to confer with Americans in Sapporo, and a good thing this was, because strange matters appeared to occur in the city, although it was not to be expected that any *Amerika-jin* would learn about them or do anything if he did. The major had explained in halting Japanese to Matsugamo, the head clerk, that he would leave the city from time to time. The Japanese supposed that a little unofficial hunting and fishing would be involved in the absences, and, wanting to be helpful, mentioned places where salmon teemed, or where woodcock, wild duck, and pheasant could be shot. But from the American's difficulty in understanding what Matsugamo said, it was obvious that the officer only knew such common phrases as "I will go on a journey" and "Bring me a bottle of beer" and "Where is the *benjo?*"

The major was satisfied with what the management thought they knew about him, but much less satisfied with what he himself knew regarding his being in Sapporo on his way to an Ainu settlement, Ikadebetsu.

And I'd better make good, he told himself, legs on the window sill, *or the C. O. will fry me in oil when I get back.*

The general, and everyone at H. Q., were probably pretty unhappy right now, Lew guessed, and were being well needled by the fraternization boys, particularly Ashton and Malloy. Davies was not at all sure but that the C. O. felt that Major Davies, with a bellyful and having messed things up, hadn't run out. The general couldn't sneak off. He had to stay in Tokyo and take it, take the heat and yowls about fraternization and elections and politics and everything else. But the Old Man had been decent about it. He had said, "You may have stumbled on something, Davies. Go have a look. But if you get a chance to do some shooting, or hook on to a big salmon, don't let me hear about it."

Before going to the C. O., Davies had talked at length with the chief medical officer. Davies had based his belief on the fact that anyone associated with Suriga would be concerned, as was the manager of Nineteen, with profit and and not with politics, and therefore the imitation Ainu and Suriga were tangled in a deal from which they expected to make money. At Nineteen, money was made from entertainment by geisha, from serving food, and from alcohol; Davies knew the details because of his servitude there. The liquors, when admirals and generals had come to the house during the war, first to celebrate and then to submerge their misery, included everything from a to z, from absinthe to what Suriga insisted was a zombi; there were vintage wines and Culmbacher beer as well as sake and purple local brandy.

The medical officer had agreed that although when the soldier had shouted the word yellow he might have been using it as an epithet, it was equally possible at Nineteen that the soldier saw Davies as truly yellow in appearance. This opinion was strengthened when Davies told the medical officer that the manager of Number Nineteen had prevented the GI's companion from saying what, exactly, had been served the soldier—which hadn't been beer.

Vision could be colored by drugs, the medical officer had explained; and H. Q. wanted such things kept far from the occupation forces. Too much alcohol, in some cases, caused blue vision. If a person saw things as if tinged with green, an overdose of quinine could be held responsible. Brown vision was often caused by caffein, and seeing red, the M. O. said, was brought about by an alkoloid called duboisin. Yellow vision came from wormwood, and from

wormwood when combined with alcohol, anise, marjoram, and angelica, to make the liqueur known as absinthe.

The M. O. had doubted the presence of absinthe in Tokyo. Perhaps a bottle or two had been brought in from French Indo-China, although it was scarce there. A supply of the liqueur sufficient so that it could be served soldiers was extremely doubtful, although, "The boys would go for it," admitted the medical officer, "because one fellow would tell another what it does."

This included the drinker being carried away in ecstasy, in being a part of imaginary unrestrained revelry. The fascination of the absinthe was intense, said the M. O. Opium, against which H. Q. fought, was no worse.

NUMBER NINETEEN had about everything in liquors, Davies had said, and, during the war, Suriga had strange sources of supplies, even including a naval officer enamored of one of Nineteen's girls. Was the imitation pariah one who supplied Number Nineteen now? Couldn't a supposed Ainu get around, as Koropok had done, safely and without being suspected nor detected?

"But where'd he get quantities of absinthe?" the M. O. had argued. "Manufacture was stopped long ago, Major."

"I don't know. And yet you say that yellow vision is caused by absinthe, a word Suriga prevented the soldier from saying."

The doctor had shrugged; Davies, then, decided that the place to begin checking on Hokuyak had to be Ikadebetsu, even if for no better reason than the fact that Suriga had blurted out the name when cornered.

"Thanks for the information," Lew had said. "I can end a racket, maybe, if my figuring is right, and a racket handled by the dirtiest people in the world, white scum in the Orient." His preoccupation over, he grinned. "Maybe I can square your helping me out by giving you a report on *moxa* as it is used here, if you are interested. I . . . What's so damn funny about that?" asked Davies, puzzled.

"Absinthe, Major," chuckled the M. O., "is made from artemesia maritima. *Moxa,* the cautery, is rolled or pulverized leaves of artemesia vulgaris. Same family. The sage family, to be exact. The various species are found almost everywhere. In America, Europe, Asia. You—" the doctor stopped; it was he, this time, who looked puzzled—"you seem a trifle excited, Major?" he said, instead of whatever expression he had intended to add.

Davies nodded then; here on his chair in Sapporo, he recalled how excited he had been. Because couldn't there be a connection between the plant from which absinthe was made, one sage, and the plant used as *moxa,* another sage? Couldn't the *moxa* mark be the easily-explained symbol of a gang, the means by which men could identify themselves? And now, in Sapporo, he had two things to work on. The past of Hokuyak, for one thing, and the cicatrices on the false *hakoya's* chest, for another, the marks of *moxa* applications which, accidentally or by intention, had formed the resultant scars in the shape of a scorpion.

The *"Gomen nasai!"* of a houseboy outside the door prepared Davies for the visitors whom he was expecting. Three men entered, two lieutenants, English and American, and a Russian captain. Davies' brass was sufficient so that it was the others who saluted; Davies began playing his part immediately by failing to rise when he returned them. The American lieutenant blinked, the English lieutenant stiffened, and the Russian captain's face flushed with annoyance.

Lieutenant Case, with infantry rifles on his lapels, trusted that Major Davies would not object because the lieutenant had informed his allied colleagues of the major's expected arrival. The major did not object. Lieutenant Abernathy, clearing his throat, hoped that the major had a decent journey north. The major said that he had. The Russian, Captain Ogrodowski, wanted to know if the major brought with him the authority to change the management of the brewery, which was increasingly more profitable, and give the brewery over to the workers. The major didn't have confiscating authority, Davies said, and went on to add, coldly, that personally he'd just as soon not be bothered by opinions on management, and that the one thing he was interested in was facts and figures.

I did that good, Davies told himself, seeing the disgust on the Russian's face. *He's had enough of me already.*

Lew didn't intend to be handicapped by men who would want to stick with him. If he accomplished anything, it would be on his own.

Captain Ogrodowski said in excellent English, "I see that my information was correct, Major Davies. You have no interest in the common people, have you?"

Now who in hell told you that? wondered Lew. And he was aware that if the captain knew about him, or thought that he did, the captain would report back to the Japanese capital concerning what Davies did in Sapporo. *Somebody,* realized Davies, beginning to believe some of the things which G-2 officers had worried about, *must keep a damned good check on what we do.*

"I am interested in carrying out my orders," said Davies.

The English Abernathy said, "We are at your service, sir."

Davies shrugged. "I will call on you later. As regards the brewery, Sapporo's chief in-

dustry, has there been trouble there, as the captain hinted?"

"Yes, sir," the American lieutenant said promptly, "but not labor troubles. I don't agree with Captain Ogrodowski. No, sir. The directors and the superintendent have been scared out of their boots. They're afraid to go near the brewery unless they have a police guard. The captain says that the workers they've exploited are getting ready to take their revenge, but that isn't the way it looks to me, Major Davies. But I don't know what's got 'em frightened, sir."

"They fear the wrath of the masses," snapped the Russian. "There can be no other reason. None. I have already told you that, haven't I?"

You and Ashton would make a good pair, thought Lew. *A couple of statement-makers.* He himself had not the slightest desire to get mixed up in the disagreement; he was sorry for the outranked lieutenants nevertheless . . . and, when he stopped to think, beer was sold to the same places where other liquors, including absinthe, were bought, and the whole thing was interesting.

Davies put out a feeler.

"Couldn't be a racket, could it?" he asked.

"Sir," said Case, "if you saw some of the characters who've gathered in Sapporo, you'd say it could be. They—"

"To Lieutenant Case," broke in the Russian, "a man with an accent is always a racketeer. It is my considered opinion, Major, that—"

Davies took a leaf from the stodgiest colonel he had ever encountered. "Put it in writing," he said curtly. "Now, if you will excuse me—"

The Russian captain's hand jerked up in an angry salute; Davies himself was not amused by the fact that an American officer, in Tokyo, had been spied upon and his actions reported. Undoubtedly he would be watched here, also, which would certainly add to the difficulties normally expected.

But, *Some fun they'll have,* Davies thought, picking up his cap when the three officers had gone, and preparing to follow them, *when they try to figure out, from what I do that they see, what I'm up to.*

HE BEGAN what he had planned right at the hotel desk, asking the head clerk about entertainment to be found in Sapporo, because he, the major, wanted a little relaxation before much dull work . . . and the entertainment started not far from the hotel, where, according to the clerk and the newly painted sign, COKTALES and LICKERS could be enjoyed within. There was a beer sign on the outer wall, with the Japanese characters painted out and replaced by the information that "Our Biiru is so Sweet and Simpul that no Injury come from Too Much Drink."

Like the signs, the interior of the almost empty place was hybrid. The lanterns and bowls of carefully arranged flowers remained, but the mats and cushions and low stands were gone. The big room was electrically lighted; there were long tables, bare, along which a few Japanese were seated uncomfortably in chairs, with beer, dull in color, before them; at the end of the room was something set up to look like a bar, behind which were two bartenders.

Both hurried forward to welcome an *Amerika-jin* with bows and to lead him over to a table; but the uniformed guest preferred to stand at the bar, which was an American habit. He ordered whisky without *tansan,* another American custom; straight whisky, Lew had planned, was more easily disposed of than beer or highballs, and, of course, would be supposed to act more speedily.

It was at his fourth drink—with the other three in the square Japanese spitting box at his feet, poured there when the bartenders scurried out to serve customers, any of the recently entered ones who might have been checking on Davies as he had been similarly observed in Tokyo—that he asked, in a blurring voice, *"O Yoshiwara mitai mono?"* and accepted a card from one of the bartenders. Promise of excellent entertainment was printed on the card, and the address where it could be obtained.

When he turned the card over, because all Japanese advertisements were thriftily printed on the reverse, he began to laugh, and his laughter, spontaneous and not feigned, made the Japanese in the place sure that the American was drunk. All Americans became happy when they drank too much.

On the reverse of the card advertising a geisha house, was printed, TRY BEST ANTI-FLEA PERFUME WATER; *and when you put two and two together,* Lew thought as he laughed, *you certainly have got something.*

His behavior did for him what he hoped it would do; it brought him company in the form of a smiling rotund Japanese, who, after bowing several times to attract Davies' attention, said, "Oh, prease, can make buy drink for officer-*san?*"

And when he does, Lew knew, *I've got to down it, too, because he'll be right beside me.* "O. K.," said Davies. "The same."

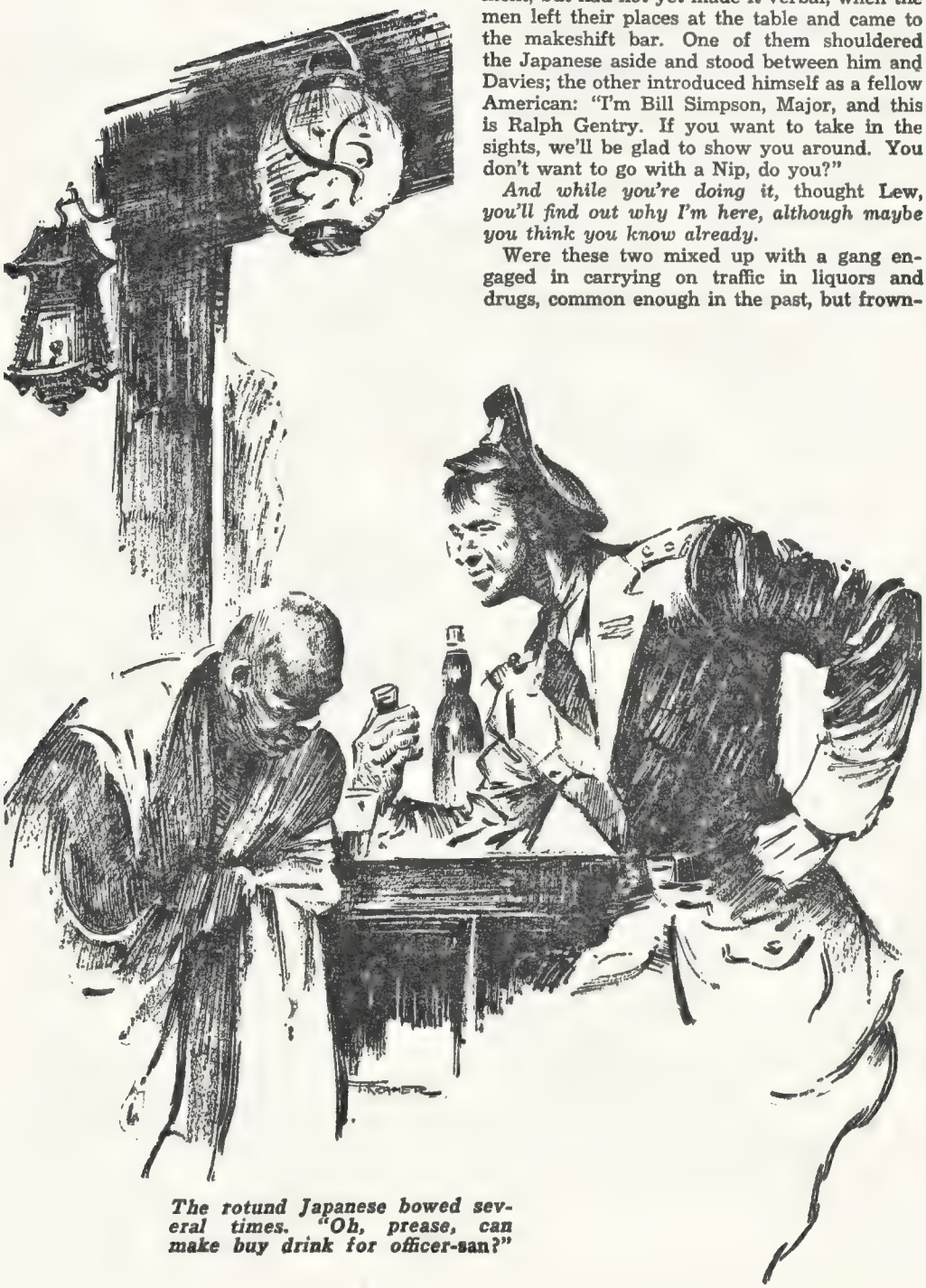
When Davies' whisky, and the Japanese' beer, were served, Lew stood sidewise at the bar. He listened to the Japanese prattle about Sapporo and Hokkaido and the fishing and hunting; he saw that two white men were seated at one of the tables, a pair who had him under observation. Davies was feeling better and better, not because of the alcohol but because he was sure that now he was getting ready for a game of wits. Nor did he underestimate his opponents.

He said, to see what would happen, and loudly, "How 'bout showing me 'round in Sapporo. I want to see what's here."

The rotund Japanese was bowing in agreement, but had not yet made it verbal, when the men left their places at the table and came to the makeshift bar. One of them shouldered the Japanese aside and stood between him and Davies; the other introduced himself as a fellow American: "I'm Bill Simpson, Major, and this is Ralph Gentry. If you want to take in the sights, we'll be glad to show you around. You don't want to go with a Nip, do you?"

And while you're doing it, thought Lew, *you'll find out why I'm here, although maybe you think you know already.*

Were these two mixed up with a gang engaged in carrying on traffic in liquors and drugs, common enough in the past, but frown-



The rotund Japanese bowed several times. "Oh, prease, can make buy drink for officer-san?"

ed on in Japan? Or were they connected with a political crew critical of the American administration in Tokyo? If they were either of the two things, wasn't it probable that the rotund Jap, shoved aside but sticking around, would be the other?

"Davies," said Lew, swaying as if under control of the whiskies. "Sure. Like to see the sights. But I've got work to do—"

"It'll wait," coaxed Gentry. The lack of ribbons on Davies caused the man to add, "Just come from the States, Major?"

Or do you know better? wondered Lew. Swiftly, he went into an act, appearing to be enraged. "Maybe I didn't get into the fighting," he snarled, "but I don't like Japs." With an erratic motion he reached around Simpson, grabbed the rotund Japanese by the top of his summer kimono, and pulled it down, but as if it happened accidentally while jerking the pudgy Nipponese toward him.

There was no *moxa* mark on the Japanese' chest.

The rotund Nipponese' suavity vanished. He hissed, *"Samurai-buta!"* as if involuntarily, very low, with the "ssssss!" sound almost obliterating what followed; but Davies' having heard, believed that when the Japanese had called him a pig of a lord, it was pretty clear on which side of the political fence the Nip could be placed. Did this leave the white men mixed up in the liquor traffic; and, if so, could they be identified by the mark of the *moxa*?

This couldn't be determined here, certainly. But if the pair escorted the major to a place of entertainment, where the first thing to happen would be the changing of hot clothes to a thin, cool *yukata*, and nothing else, Davies saw no reason why he wouldn't have a chance for a look-see. It was sufficient reason for him to accept the invitation, which he did.

HE WAS about to leave with the pair when two well-dressed Japanese hurried into the shop. Both were elderly; both had worried faces. Up to the bar they hastened, side by side, until they bowed in unison to the apparently intoxicated American officer. Their faces were deadly serious; they avoided looking at anyone except the man in uniform.

Keenly alert, Davies saw that while the rotund Japanese jostled rudely against one of the elderly, wrinkled Japanese, as the white man, earlier, had done to him, both white men, Simpson and Gentry alike, moved slightly aside for the Japanese as they bowed. Davies found the expressions on their faces interesting.

Those are two bad boys, decided Lew. *I'll bet they not only know their way around Sapporo, but Hong-Kong and Macao as well.*

He had the men who called themselves Americans, and the oily, fat Japanese, identified; but what, exactly, was the game being played, which centered around an American officer newly arrived in Sapporo?

One of the old Japanese said earnestly, *"Irasshaimashi;* may I offer my home to you, please? I am Hagawari Shijo, president of the brewery company. I—"

"Pig Shijo," exploded the rotund Japanese. "Dog Shijo. Crusher-of-poor-men Shijo. You wish to get this fool of an American under your control—"

The man who had introduced himself as Simpson began to speak in Japanese, ripping out what he said to the old man so swiftly and slurringly that no American who had learned his Japanese out of a book could have possibly followed what he was insisting; it brought fear to Hagawari Shijo's face, and a slowly growing smile to the round face of the younger Japanese. Davies' own expression remained perfectly blank, stupidly blank. Not until Simpson said finally, to him and in English, "I got you out of that one, Major! The last officer sent here to report was taken to this damned yellow-belly's house, and the old swine filled him so full of lies and false figures that when the officer returned to Tokyo he faced a court martial. It was all kept secret. Did you know about it?"

Davies shook his head.

He knew what Simpson had done; threatened the head of the brewery company with loss of the business by the simple and workable scheme of throwing his, Simpson's, word, as an American businessman, on the side of the movement to take over Sapporo Beer in the name of the people.

That the old Japanese, and his companion, did not protest seemed to Davies to be proof that while the old men might suspect what Simpson and Gentry were engaged in, they could not prove that the pair were other than businessmen. Davies had no trouble in guessing what interest the scamps had in the brewery workers. *They must be after it themselves,* seemed logical to Lew, *and my arrival has brought it to a head.* It occurred to him also that if the gang could operate under the name of Sapporo Beer, they could get around beautifully, all aside from the tremendous profit to be made from the sale of beer itself to GI's.

It's a tangled web, thought Lew; but he was beginning to see through some of the intricacies. The time had come, he decided, to know if all this was separate from what had started him on the venture, or was part of it.

Ignoring the pleading faces of the two old men, Davies said, "Sick of argument. Too much argument. Don' und'stand. Want to get away. Want to go fishin'. Like fishin'. Don' like girls. Don' want go Yosh'wara. Sleepy."

"Best fishing in the world here," promised Gentry. "You're fortunate, Major. I was plan-

ning to go after salmon. Glad to have you along."

And away from here, thought Davies, but what he said, mumblingly, was, "Got t' think. Don' rush me."

It was like being Koropok again and, undetected, watching the wheels go round, except that instead of being the stupid pariah Ainu among Japanese, he was now the dumb occupational officer among scoundrels. The white men, whether marked with *moxa* or not, were bad boys. The rotund Nip, who was in opposition to the manner in which the American authorities were permitting the people of Japan to vote without outside influences, in which view he was encouraged by Captain Ogrodowski as well as by Ashton and Malloy, had the look, to Davies, of a banzai-killer. The way the Jap flared up and boiled over was proof of the latter. A fanatic.

Davies was tired of plot and counterplot. He wanted action, now that he had an understanding of the forces which were at work. If the two officers on duty here, the American and English lieutenants, sharp young fellows, were bogged down in an effort to keep things straight, he himself, Lew Davies, had no intention of getting involved in a political performance. He wanted to bring matters to a head; and, in a maudlin voice he said, watching closely out of eyes which seemed almost to close with drunken sleep, "Fishin'. Go fishin'. Fish at Ikadebetsu."

He saw the narrowing of Simpson's eyes, heard the quick breath. The rotund Nip began to laugh. Hagawari Shijo said sadly, as if he could expect nothing from an American who knew so little of the north country, *"Dare ni kitta.* There is no fishing there, sir. Only mountains."

There's something there, thought Lew. *Plenty, I'll bet. And I want whatever is there, or whoever is there, to be waiting for me. It'll save time.* He himself took a deep breath, but as if he were attempting to pull himself together. He laughed again; and then, dropping all pretense of drunkenness, said clearly, "If I go on a fishing expedition to Ikadebetsu, I wonder what I'll find?"

He was racing out of the drinking shop before Simpson could do more than start the motion which told of the gun he carried, before Gentry could try to first grab him and then prevent his own companion from revealing the weapon. He was racing at full speed up the street before the pair reached the entrance; but he was, they knew, a marked man. A white man in Sapporo. An officer. So there was nothing to it, whether he skulked in the hotel or sought to reach Ikadebetsu. The damned fool, as Simpson said to Gentry, had to sound off, just like an American.

Soon, Simpson lounged in the shade across the street from the hotel, watchful for the appearance of uniforms which would have probably meant that the major had contacted other officers; Gentry was at the hotel's rear. Simpson had already sent off a message, scrawled on paper and in sufficiently cryptic English, by the first passerby, and in minutes the pair were joined by others, so that Major Llewelyn Davies was going to find it difficult to leave.

Word to the handful of occupational personnel would get him out safely, but to reach Ikadebetsu, with or without an escort, would prove difficult. And if he got there, things would be ready for him.

Davies, able to see from his room what was going on, realized that the stakes were high. He grinned as he continued his preparations; he smoked a cigarette, and thought, sadly, how damned good it tasted.

It was a half hour later, with guests or visitors coming in and out in front, and servants or tradespeople entering and leaving in the rear, that Matsugamo, the head clerk, personally booted out the idiot of an Ainu who must have wandered into the honorable hotel without being seen. The stocky, bearded pariah, clad in filthy blue rags, picked himself up and, head low, shambled away. He passed within a few feet of Gentry, who gave him another kick for good measure; and as he continued on his dejected way, and reached the drinking shop, the rotund Japanese emerged, and stood squarely before him.

"Name, Ainu?" demanded the Japanese.

"Koropok, lord."

The Japanese kicked him also.

CHAPTER IV

KOROPOK THE AINU

IKADEBETSU, from Sapporo and the south, could be reached only by a narrow road; the railway, with its bridges and tunnels, avoided the straight line to the north, and even main roads would have no part of the mountains, streams, forests, and impenetrable depths which grew more forbidding as Llewelyn Davies, turned again into Koropok the Ainu, sweated upward in the heat of the short sweltering summer. There was shade, dense, under the wild magnolias, seventy feet high, and an intense perfume; but the very shade quivered with heat, and the scent of the magnolia blossoms was overpowering. Worse, a giant horsefly, *abu,* abounded in the forests, and made the most of a man whose face, arms, and legs were unclad.

Now and again Davies came in sight of a crude Ainu village, always smelled before seen. He gave all a wide berth, because while

it had been easy to get out of Sapporo, he did not intend to have anyone from the city, or anyone with whom Simpson might have somehow contacted on the trail ahead, question anyone on the narrow road which led north to Ikadebetsu.

He slept in the open; he ate sparingly of the food which, along with his Ainu tatters, had been in his bag, supplementing it with edible lily bulbs found along the waterways, and with berries. Since he had lived with the Ainus, not only in Tokyo but in the mountains, he knew what to do; one thing he had neglected was a means to catch fish. Enviously, one night, he

"Name, Ainu?" demanded the Japanese . . . "Koropok, lord." The Japanese kicked him also.

watched a bearded Ainu standing on a rock in a brawling stream, torch in one hand and spear in another . . . and while Davies could have taken the salmon from the Ainu after it was caught, for which the fisher would probably have blamed the dreaded earth-spider-spirit, he was afraid that if the account got about, as stories were told and retold in the Orient, someone other than an Ainu might not think that the thief was supernatural. No gentle and peaceful Ainu would rob another Ainu, or anyone else. But a thick slice of salmon, broiled over coals, would have tasted damned good . . .

Because Davies had been Koropok, where he was under observation every minute, he acted as he had before. His last cigarette had been smoked in the hotel, while he had changed and done some note-writing for the American lieutenant in Sapporo; he had eaten his last decent meal, and even the food which had been in his bag and now was in his pack had been such as a pariah might have. Had he been apprehended, there would have been nothing to show that he was other than a pariah.

To the west, unseen because of mountains, was where the Sea of Japan and the Gulf of Tartary met; to the east, again behind mountains, a railway threaded, and long snow-sheds alternated with tunnels and jungles. Eastward of the railway, however, were rich fields in the valleys, lush with grains, and magnificent orchards where apples, pears, and peaches fruited. The Ainus had long been driven from such land. Left to them were the jagged peaks of the mountains. Those who remained, animated bundles of rags, did the dirtiest work for the Japanese, which included standing in the fields, arms waving, as human scarecrows.

Ikadebetsu came into vision suddenly, all at once, as Davies came out of forest; it was far down, a compact huddle of huts, and, like many places in Hokkaido and Honshu, steam rose from it, the steam of volcanic origin.

Must be the Ainu idea of heaven, thought the weary Davies, because according to pariahs, who spent their lives shivering, life after death was always warm. He saw, from his vantage point, no sign of anything unusual. Thatched huts, one jammed against the next, the roofs black with smoke. The open space dedicated to the feared bear-god, with its peeled pole and wood-shavings at the top. And yet Ikadebetsu was the point from which trouble came. But from the path, which zigzagged down, there was only the squalor of an Ainu settlement to be seen.

If I've come just for the walk, Lew told himself, *I'm ass number one.*

He could see Ainu men in the village, and this surprised him. Every man able to walk should have been out in the forest, hunting the deer and bear which were the mainstay, together with dried fish, of the villagers' diet. He was rather pleased about that, however; it would make Koropok less conspicuous, and, to anyone except another Ainu, all of the bearded pariahs looked alike. The one reason he could figure as to why the men were about was that there must have been a death in the forest—an Ainu killed by a bear—and the others had returned, according to custom, to satisfy the spirit of the dead man.

Davies, adjusting his empty pack, started down the path, his story ready; without hesitation, he entered the first hut, as was proper for a stranger, and, speaking in the clipped Japanese which meant that he had lived in one of the settlements outside a Nipponese city, asked the way to the house of the chief.

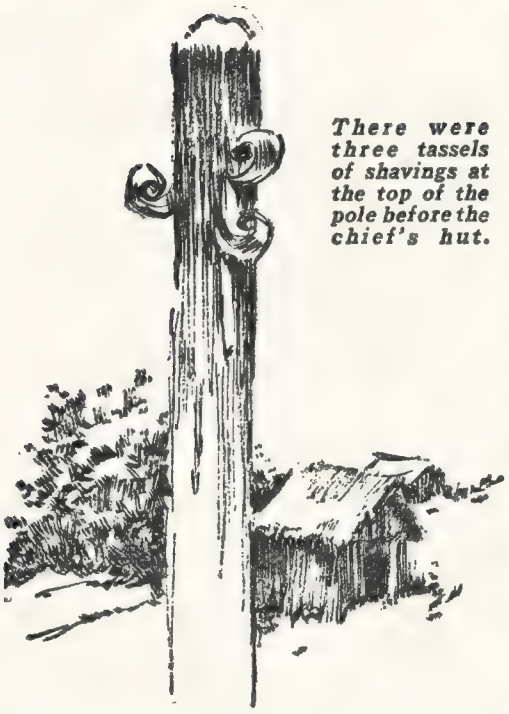
A dull word or two from the Ainu inside the hut, uttered without interest and without an upward glance, gave Davies the direction and location.

The Nips must've been beating on him, decided Lew. *Forest Ainus ought to have more pep.* He did not say anything, but, in true Ainu fashion, shambled away, toward the chief's larger hut, and between rows of hovels which gave a man scarcely room enough to pass. He saw the familiar sights, heard the familiar sounds of women who pounded wild grains to be mixed with bear fat; only when he reached the space of earth where the peeled pole stood, with the chief's hut beyond, did he see anything different; and even this merely aroused his curiosity, and was unimportant. There were three tassels of shavings tied to the top of the pole. Davies had never seen more than one. *Gives me something to ask about, and start conversation,* decided the American as he stepped inside.

REED matting was under his feet. The room was so dark, being windowless, that it took him time to determine what or who was in it; whoever was, squatted beside the low sleeping platform, seemed to have moved, to have made some sort of gesture with his or her hands . . . and this, again, surprised Davies, because when a person entered an Ainu dwelling, those within should remain stockstill, lest the man who entered might think that the hut's owner was reaching for a weapon. Davies saw, shortly, that two men were crouched on the floor, on the matting; at the fireplace, where smoke hovered, a woman stirred at the cooking-pot; but whether she was young or old, a first wife or one acquired in the bearded chief's more recent years, the newcomer could not determine.

He said, "*Kom' wa,*" as was proper; neither of the two men replied. Then Koropok, typically an Ainu, pleaded, "*Membo' g' na'* . . . I hunger."

The older of the pair, the chief, jerked his



There were three tassels of shavings at the top of the pole before the chief's hut.

head toward the fireplace, which was the invitation.

I've never seen an Ainu act like this, thought Davies. He began again, "*Mako' n' sh'barak.* I have been gone long."

The chief should have asked him where he had been, and about his own village; again the old pariah remained silent. Nor was the stranger invited to set his pack down, nor to accept the house as his own.

"I have killed a Japanese," said Koropok, proudly. "I have run away. Can I be hidden here?"

This was his trump card; but he had not expected to play it like this, not to a silent, seemingly hostile chief.

"*Nan' sh' kit'?*" the chief said slowly, whispering. "Why have you come?"

"To hide," said Koropok.

The man beside the chief muttered, "Nothing is hidden from them."

From whom? *What goes on?* wondered Lew. *Was I on the beam, coming here?* The sudden glance which the chief gave toward the woman at the pot began to give Davies an inkling, because the woman was young, rounded, and, while far from pretty, not repulsive. Was someone, not an Ainu, after her? Someone woman-starved? Maybe a fellow accustomed to women, as a fellow from Macao or Hong-Kong would be?

Davies did not say, "Hidden from whom?" but, instead, like a young Ainu before a chief, waited. The old men muttered until they reached a decision. "*War' ko,*" the chief said. "He is an evil man. You must kill him. If you do not, I will tell him you went where no man may go, and then he will kill you."

"When I killed the Japanese," said Koropok, "I was brave."

The chief called to the girl, who ladled greasy bear meat out of the pot and into an earthenware bowl which she brought to Koropok. While he ate, thus putting himself in debt to the Ainu, the chief said, "You will kill him tonight."

Not me, thought Lew, gobbling away. *Not until I see what goes on, and have a shot at identifying whoever's here.*

Ikadebetsu was certainly an ideal hideaway for racketeers; but why Ikadebetsu? Why not any one of a dozen other places? Davies was still bothered about that, and intended to find the answer, even if it were only by chance that Simpson and Gentry and the imitation Ainu, Hokuyak, knew too much about the isolated village.

Davies, when the chief's companion plucked at his sleeve, to lead him out of the hut, became truly Koropok. He whimpered. "I am afraid . . . "

The chief's eyes began to burn brightly. "You need not be afraid," he whispered. "I will make a man of you."

What the Ainu took out from his ragged jacket could have been what caused the moving of his hands in concealing it when his hut was entered. To Davies' amazement it was a small paper flag of one of the allied nations. "Touch it," promised the Ainu, "and you are a man and not a slave."

"I do not feel any different," said Koropok, after obeying. "What is this? A powerful charm of the bear-god?"

"The Great Bear himself sent it to us."

In a timid voice, Koropok asked, "Did it drop out of the sky?"

"A sacred messenger brought it," replied the old chief. "A bear-brother with a thick black beard. He came from Sakhalin. When I was young, I lived there, among bearded men. *Orosha-jin,* they were called. But the Japanese lied about us. We were sent here, because the Japanese said we belong to them. Soon we will belong to no one." His harangue, amazing for an Ainu, gave him the courage to add, "It will be easier to kill a *danna-san* than a *nippon-san,* Koropok."

Koropok said, "A *danna-san?* Here?"

"A wizard. A magician. But you have touched the sacred charm of the bear, and you will be protected. Go with Pi-shak. He will show you."

This, thought Davies, as he shambled after the chief's companion, *is a twisted course I'm*

following. On one hand, unscrupulous scoundrels, well versed in a grim trade, were gathering themselves a traffic which would pile up their wealth and allow them to expand into other ventures until they would have a hand in whatever went on in Japan. On the other hand were men engaged in a political venture which meant trouble for the American authorities and disaster for the Old Man; and what the result of the struggle for Japan's control would be, Davies refused to guess as he shuffled along behind Pi-shak, through the village and up a hill path.

He believed that the chief's desire to kill someone, a white man, stemmed from advances made to the chief's young wife. The Ainu had selected Koropok, felt Lew, because Koropok had already killed a man, something which the Ainus never did, and also because if someone must be given up as the killer, Koropok was not a member of the village nor the clan. Thus if Koropok, detected, were himself slaughtered, his spirit would not return to this village, but to his own, wherever it was.

THE way out of Ikadebetsu, to the north, was as steep as the way down had been. The old pariah, Pi-shak, made slow going of it; and when, after a dozen pauses, he picked a spot where it was possible to leave the path, and climb upward deeper into the forest, he went even more slowly. What the Ainu was doing, it seemed to the American, was circling the path. After a bitter scrambling over rock of volcanic formation, but out of which trees, festooned with creepers, grew, the old Ainu was so exhausted that he dropped to the ground.

Koropok asked, "What is the *danna-san's* magic?"

"You will see," panted Pi-shak.

Davies' early knowledge of Ainu folklore and legend stood him in good stead as he prodded for information. "Does the magic require women?"

Pi-shak nodded. "My young wife. Oikik's daughter. Madak's two wives."

"So many women will make much magic for one man," said Koropok.

"There are more men than one."

"They all make magic?"

The Ainu, getting to his feet, said, "You will see." He reached over and patted the *geta*-mending knife in Koropok's belt. "Kill them slowly," he urged, and, getting out his bearskin charm bag, carefully drew out the toe of a bear. As he gave this to his stocky young companion, he whispered, "I give you this. Kill a *danna-san* who has hair the color of a persimmon. Kill him for me. He stole my wife."

Taking the charm, Koropok asked, "Cannot the Great Bear help you? What did his messenger say about all this?"

"The messenger came a year ago. When there was fighting. Before the *nippon-san* were defeated. He said, 'Wait. Your day will come.' And so we wait."

"What else did he say?"

Pi-shak replied, "He said we must say nothing to anyone of his visit. He said that no matter what took place, to remember that one day we would be free men, like he was, and to remain silent. The *orosha-san* remained with us. Oh, such fine tales he told us of his native land, *Orosha!* But when he departed, these magicians came. Evil men who perform magic."

"The *Orosha-jin* is called Hokuyak?"

"You saw him, too? He said that he would talk with our people everywhere, even in Tokyo, to prepare them for the day they would be free."

And so there's a Russian scoundrel mixed up in the business, realized Davies, *a smart boy working out under cover of an ideology.* It didn't matter to Lew whether this was positively the case, or whether it might be the other way around, and the imitation Ainu, Hokuyak, engaged in liquor and drug traffic to conceal his actual purpose of being in Japan. His job was tracking things down.

Pi-shak's caution increased when he started off again. Soon a sort of mist, a fog, sifted down through the trees, and from the smell of it the eruptive springs could not be far off, since there was no wind. Mingled with the metallic odor was one more pleasant, and new, biting and pungent, and it came, Davies determined at last, from the scrubby growth through which he was advancing. He picked one of the purple-stemmed branches, on which the leaves stuck out, green above the white and cottony underneath. The smell was that of sage. Which sage? That which was employed as cautery in *moxa,* or that from which absinthe was produced? From what the H. Q. medical officer had said, it must be the former.

Getting hot, thought Lew; and that was true, also. Heat shimmered where any sun penetrated into the forest. Then, without warning, Pi-shak stopped and pointed. A chasm was at the feet of the old Ainu. At the chasm's bottom, partially veiled by steam, Davies saw the figures of men, and strange round high mounds, from the tops of which light was reflected almost as if from glass, and from the sides of which, near the bottom, steam emerged. Davies had never seen anything like these mounds, nor had he heard anything about them, although, except for the glittering squares atop them, they seemed to be of rock and very old.

Some of the mounds, on the far side of the ravine, sent out no puffs of steam; in front of one of these mounds a man was seated, smoking. His hair, Davies saw as Pi-shak began to mumble in futile rage, was violently red; the fellow was a white man, and, equally obviously,

the canvas chair on which he sprawled in comfort had never been made in Ikadebetsu.

WHILE the Ainu continued to curse, Davies kept on with his examination of an unbelievable scene, here in the isolation of Hokkaido. He saw evidence that more than a chair had been brought here. The steam which puffed out of many of the big mounds came from pipes. There was a stack of small boxes, unlike Japanese containers, near one of the mounds. Whoever was operating the place had come mighty well prepared. *And I don't see how they got the stuff in here without either the Japanese police or G-2 being wise to it,* decided Lew.

It came to him then, that moment, that whatever equipment had been brought to Ikadebetsu could well have come down from the north into northern Hokkaido. Hadn't Hokuyak come from the north?

He was glad that Pi-shak was still dribbling out his venom; it gave the stocky man known as Koropok time to investigate, time to figure out that the tops of the mounds where rock and earth had been replaced by a shiny substance, as if in thin sheets, could actually be split hides, which would let in light. Glass would be a difficult thing to bring, from anywhere, to Ikadebetsu.

What were the mounds?

Koropok asked Pi-shak, "Why does the ground rise like the beads of a necklace? I have never seen such a thing."

Pi-shak mouthed a final curse. "If you kill the one with red hair," he slobbered, "I will tell you."

"If you do not tell me," said Koropok, "I will kill only the man I have been ordered to kill by the chief." He let that sink in, and then said, "Which is the man who intends to violate the wife of the chief?"

The old Ainu placed a trembling hand on Koropok's arm. "The one with the fire-hair came to my house," he said. "I was ashamed. I had no sake to give him. But he was anxious to do me honor. So I thought, because he brought a bottle. When it was opened, the smell of the hills came out, like magic. I drank. It was sweet and good. It tasted like flowers on the hills. And when I drank several times, my youth returned to me in sleep. When I awoke, my wife was gone."

Absinthe? *I'll bet it was,* thought Lew.

"Our sacred place"—the Ainu pointed to the chasm with its mounds—"was also taken from us. These men make their magic under the roofs of rock where we came in fear to worship the stone axes of our ancestors. When the magic is made, it is put into bottles. The bottles are taken away."

At the chasm's bottom, Davies realized, must be the remains of pit-dwellings, once occupied by a primitive people. It took someone who knew of the isolated ravine to have selected it for the damnable business; in one way or another, some chemist and archaeologist must have spoken together. How this had happened, Lew felt, was not important, nor was he interested in exactly what was being done in the mounds, nor how the distillation apparatus might be set up. He would have liked a first hand look-see. The risk was too great. His job, right now, was to get out of Ikadebetsu and back to Sapporo and arrange to have the chasm surrounded and the men caught. The last thing Davies intended to do was to go after the scum who had taken the Ainu girls. That would come later.

He wanted to get rid of Pi-shak.

"When I kill the evil ones, including the one with fire-hair," said Koropok, "I may not live. Some of the evil ones will wonder who brought me here, where it is forbidden to come. I do not wish you to be caught and killed, Pi-shak. Return to the chief. Tell him that the evil ones will die."

And if they put up a battle later, thought Lew, *that's no lie.*

"I wish to see the death of the red one," muttered Pi-shak. "Slip down, Koropok. He will not hear your hunter's footsteps. Get behind him. Drive the knife into him. Do not be afraid. Look! Now he is drinking. Not from a magic bottle. From a small black, fat bottle of sake. See?"

Davies glanced where the red-headed man sat; and, as he did, the fellow yelled, and what the Ainu thought was a stubby bottle of sake came away from in front of the white man's face. It was no bottle at all, but the binoculars which the man with red hair must have raised from time to time to sweep the approaches leading to the ravine.

Men scrambled out of the mounds. Davies hesitated for the briefest of moments. The chase would be on when these men forced the chief to admit that a strange Ainu had come to the village; and all the blame for having gone to the pit-dwellings would be placed on Koropok. Things would be rough on old Pi-shak for having taken Koropok to see the chasm . . . but Davies didn't see how that could be helped. He himself, a young man, with a start, ought to get back to Sapporo. The ancient Ainu could never make it.

"Pi-shak," said Davies, "their magic tells them we are here. I will hide in the forest. When they come to find me, I will kill them. You must return to the chief. Go. Go quickly. Say I forced you to come with me. Say—"

A rifle shot cracked; Pi-shak's scream and the echo hammered back and forth in the chasm. But as the Ainu jerked and constricted, his thin old arms snapped once like wires in

the wind, and reached Davies enough to circle one of Lew's arms with the sting and force of wire being reeled. The two men, the live and the dying, the American and the old Ainu, fell together over the chasm's edge.

CHAPTER V

MARKED MEN

HALFWAY down, a jagged boulder pulled them apart; fifty feet from the bottom, Davies tried to get his hands on the clump of shrub growing on the least of rocky shelves. And failed. But the impact against the ledge, bruising as it was, hurled him away from the ravine's side, so that he was thrown

The two men, the live and the dying, the American and the old Ainu, fell together over the chasm's edge.

to the top of a mound. His body tore through the pale-colored square at the top as if it were paper, which it actually was, thick, heavy translucent paper, easily transported. Davies fell into a pungent softness which broke his fall.

The interior of the mound was hot with steaming jungle heat piped into it; the biting pungency from the crushed leaves of artemesia absinthia forced into swift, lush growth in the clever makeshift hothouse. But Davies, partially dazed, thought of one thing only: if he had to die here, he must die as an Ainu and not give the men operating the absinthe production, and heaven knew what else, cause to become suspicious. If they were not positive that he was merely a disobedient and curious Ainu, there would be no one here when G-2 came to see why he did not return to Sapporo. While this whirled in his head, he resisted the instinctive desire to get to his feet. An Ainu would remain, cowering, where he had fallen.

His best hope was that the men here would

kill him quickly instead of questioning him, an inquisition in which some of the worst minds in Asia could suggest tortures to produce talking. If they didn't finish him at once, *I've got to take it,* Davies told himself; but it would be a hell of a way to die, now that the fighting was over. A hell of a way, and a hell of a place.

The red-headed man was first inside; Davies managed to roll just enough to miss the wild blow from the rifle butt, and to whimper, *"Kurak' t' m'sen'* . . . I am only a poor Ainu, lord—"

The second man who had stormed into the mound was cursing in French; he aimed a kick at the tattered figure sprawled on the sage plants while grabbing at the red-headed man's rifle. A third man, behind the first two, stormed at Red Hair thickly in what sounded like German-accented English; first, the gutturally-speaking fellow roared, they must question the interloper . . .

There was a superstition, the last speaker said, while he and the other two examined the cowering Koropok with their eyes, and the men outside crowded the door to the mound-greenhouse similar to those around it, among the Hokkaido Ainu that if a man's beard was removed with metal, shaved off, he would be forced to tell the truth. It was a trial among the outcasts; and he himself, who had studied the Ainu people and their pit dwellings, would like to see how it worked.

At least it would be amusing, in this isolated place where the only amusement was found in the Ainu women.

And when it happens, thought Lew, turned to ice despite the terrific steaming heat, *I'll be a gone goose, because the beard is a phony.* Worse, the gang was sure to leave Ikadebetsu, only to set up shop elsewhere, and continue to raise hell. If a GI couldn't find whisky, he'd have a try at absinthe. Nothing was more habit-provoking. *I'm a gone goose anyhow,* Lew told himself, *so I might as well go out in doing something.*

Grab a rifle? He had to rise to get at one; he'd be smashed unconscious before he could get his hands on a gun. Use his hands, his fists? Again he'd only be knocked out. Being killed had to be O. K., but not merely becoming insensible. If he were killed, the beard business would be forgotten.

The red-headed man reached inside his half-open shirt, scratching the red pelt on his chest, heat-irritated. Davies saw the marks made by *moxa,* the scar shaped like a scorpion. Yes, it must be this which identified members of the gang to one another, to men unknown to one another save for the mark of identification. Knowing this did Davies no good now, as, head down, he tried to formulate something, anything, which would result in instant death.

Beside him, close enough so that he could feel the heat of it, sufficiently intense so that his arm was almost being seared, was one of the pipes which heated the mound, a pipe through which flowed the steam jetting out at the far end of the mounds, along with a number of similar pipes. Carefully, Davies managed to get a look at it; but as a weapon it would never serve, even if he could wrench off one of the lengths. He would be beaten down, he was positive, before he could rise to his feet and swing a length of the pipe. But . . .

Would it work? thought Davies. *Will it?*

He didn't want to die!

Davies did not so much as run the tip of his tongue over his lips. He was going to try what he had in mind; but to the three men in the mound which smelled of the pungency of absinthe he continued to look like a terrified Ainu.

It's got to be done all in one motion, decided Lew. He knew the cost of failure; that didn't matter. Not the way things stacked up.

One hand, the nearest, was already on the pipe; he had his other hand on it, to sear it also, before Red Head had his rifle up, or the others made their first move toward him. He didn't feel the heat of the pipe as he wrenched at it, getting into the movement all the strength of his shoulders and stocky body. He gave one fierce, furious jerk; he rolled away from the blow of the rifle, and was actually on his knees when steam from the pipe, wrenched apart at a joint, hissed into the mound like scalding mist, like the falling of sulphurous fog, like what it was, a steam from the volcanic formations of the Ikadebetsu chasm.

HE FELT no pain from his seared fist as he drove it into the face of whoever was in front of him; but when he had done this, he dropped to his knees again, unable to see, but with the advantage of knowing that whatever body came in contact with his own was that of an enemy. He crawled across fragrant leaves again; at the wall of the mound, with the hiss of the steam no more deadly than the shouts of the scorpion-marked men, he worked his way toward the more brilliant whiteness of sun slanted on the emerging steam at the entrance.

Steam billowed up through the spot where Davies had fallen through the mound's artificial top; steam clouded out at the entrance, sulphurous and heavy enough so that while some of it rose, more of it crawled along the ground, like poison gas in warfare. And Davies crawled along with it, first avoiding the legs of the gang who sought to get inside, next following the outside of the wall of the mound . . . and lastly, when the steam began to thin, running and never turning.

Not until he was above the chasm, taking the way he had seen when on the brink with Pi-shak, did he stop, prone and protected from vision from below by a rough, spined bush, and look back. The steam still billowed out of the mound; but by this time armed men were tearing about the strange pit-dwellings, and some already were preparing to search elsewhere . . .

For an Ainu, thought Davies soberly. He hoped grimly that the scum of all Asia would argue themselves out of any doubts they might have, although, *What doubts?* Lew asked himself. *They'll suppose I grabbed the pipe to use it as a weapon, being the one Ainu in a thousand who'd try to save his own life. What they'll concentrate on,* Davies was sure, *is in getting me, whether I'm an Ainu or anything else.*

And so the chase began.

Davies swung out of the forest, at last, running, and avoiding the village of Ikadebetsu; and at first he stuck to the trail. He had the advantage of a start, a trail he had already used, and a hard, trained body accustomed to fatigue and hardship. He had the advantage of knowing his destination. This latter the men marked with *moxa*—and because it was a Japanese medicinal mark, Davies believed that Japs were also in the gang—did not have; they couldn't know whether he would go north or south, nor where he might leave the trail, if southward bound, instead of continuing on to Sapporo.

But they had one advantage. Some of the men, perhaps in good condition, could take food with them, or take it from the pariah settlements on the way; Davies, on the other hand, knew that he was going to be desperately hungry before he ever reached Sapporo. But that was O. K. For it was fine to keep going, to have a goal, to be alive, even if certain that his pursuers would be close behind him and were armed, or perhaps might get to Sapporo before him, because they might pass him at night, when he would sleep off the trail. When he thought of that possibility, he began to grin, for the first time since he had turned himself into Koropok. It was a broad grin; but what he was thinking amused him.

The return began to sap Davies' ability to keep going swiftly. When he drank, at a stream, hunger gnawed more bitingly; and when he slept, no matter how exhausted, food entered into his dreams. Even such scraps as had been flung at him when he had been the *hakoya* at Number Nineteen, instead of the equally false Hokuyak, a man marked with the scorpion scar of the gang, would have been wolfed down. A bowl of slippery macaroni-like *oden* would have tasted wonderful; so would a few shreds of fish mixed with millet. And when he thought of American food . . .

By the time he could see the brewery chimneys above Sapporo, he looked utterly an Ainu, a field scarecrow. Hair and beard were matted with dust, sweat caked his dark face; what had been a tattered blue jacket was brown from dust and sweat . . . and the first Japanese who stared at him when he reached the outskirts giggled until the filthy pariah was out of sight.

If any of the Ikadebetsu gang got here ahead of me, thought Lew, as he had so many times before, *I'll damn soon know it.*

He didn't want a quick, silencing shot to be the way he'd find out; he seemed to shuffle along like a dispirited Ainu, but was keenly alert. His exhaustion had vanished, and was replaced with an exhilaration which tingled through him strongly, setting his seared palms to aching as a reminder of where he had been and of what had happened there.

Davies believed that if any of the scorpion-marked men had reached Sapporo, to be ready for him, there were two possibilities as to what preparations had been arranged for his welcome. One would be that any pariah entering the city would given a quick examination and, if there were the least notion that the pariah had been at Ikadebetsu, there would be a dead Ainu. The other possibility was that if tthe Ainu who had escaped from the chasm was not an Ainu at all, the masquerader would head for wherever the Allied H. Q. of Sapporo might be . . . and be killed before getting inside to tell what he had discovered.

But Davies was headed for the hotel.

THERE had been time for the note which he had sent to the American lieutenant, before disguising himself, to have been relayed to Tokyo. Time for action to have been taken. However, before starting out, Davies had not known that it would be necessary for the men on duty at Sapporo to watch for a perilous return . . . although he was now aware that a figure had detached itself from shadow, not a Jap figure from the size, and was following him.

But not one of the gang, reasoned Lew, *or he'd do more than follow me, if he had any kind of look-see at me.* Obviously, word had come to Sapporo; one of the Ikadebetsu gang must have passed Koropok on the trail. *He'll wait until there's no Nip in sight,* thought Lew, sticking to his first figuring, *and then drag me off to question me, and then, if I know anything about Asiatic scum, kill me.*

Davies quickened his pace. So did the man behind him. Japanese blinked at the sight of a rapidly-shambling Ainu.

When the next intersection was reached, from which the hotel could be seen on Sapporo's principal street, the man whistled twice. Davies did not wait to see who was being warned by the signal. He ran. Like a terrified Ainu. He

kept his stride a jerky one, and not smooth, as an American would run. He waved his arms. And when the man behind him yelled, a warning in a foreign language unfamiliar to Davies, Koropok ran faster. No shot yet . . .

He isn't sure, thought Davies; and then the doubts of his pursuer must have become complicated by the appearance of a Japanese policeman, who shrilled to the *inu* from the hills to stop running in an improper manner dangerous to pedestrians. But the policeman, about to knock the Ainu down with a club, stepped aside politely on seeing that a white man was chasing the pariah.

People of Sapporo goggled at the sight of a foul pariah running away from the foreigner. This was better than a *no* play, any day of the seven. Oh, how the bearded dog ran, and how the beardless one ran after him! What an amazing spectacle! *Ai!* And now another crazy *Amerika-jin,* or *Orosha-jin,* or perhaps even a *Doitsu-jin,* one of those yellow-hairs who were formerly allies, was attempting to cut off the equally crazy Ainu! Oh, the Ainu was so terrified that he leaped over the little wooden fence which protected the hotel's grass and flowers, as if the sign there were not there at all! But of course no Ainu could read, neither the Japanese characters in black, nor the strange words which had been added, for visitors, which warned, *DO NOT TROMPLE GRASS OR BRAKE FLOUR . . .*

Why, the crazed pariah was running up the steps! Oh, how the honorable clerk would catch him, and throw him out!

The honorable clerk, inside, was busier than usual; the hotel had more guests than for a long time, including important men from Tokyo, who had come from the United States. He gasped when he looked up; but before he could shout at the wild figure which had burst in, the bearded apparition had bounded through the filled lobby and was making the turn into the corridor. A white man, and a second, and, in another moment, two more, hurried into the hotel, breathless; the pariah, said one, had grabbed his pocket watch and chain . . . which way had he gone?

The policeman had come in also, bowing to the clerk, but making no effort to go after those who were following the clerk's pointing finger.

Davies raced up the flight of stairs. His jacket was already off; and when he reached the door of his room he grabbed tentatively at the knob. Locked. He backed off slightly, wrapping the jacket around his right hand; he mounted to the transom with his left foot on the knob and his body flung against the upper portion of the door, and, as he went high, smashed the glass. As his fist wound about with cloth went through, Davies hooked his elbow on the transom frame. He steadied himself a moment, and then pulled himself through and dropped to the floor.

His bag was there. So was the bathroom. Koropok grabbed the bag, hurried into the bathroom, and, grinning, locked the door.

It was minutes, as the searchers examined room after room while an intent audience, sprinkled with uniforms, watched, before the broken glass of the transom was discovered. Matsugamo's master key unlocked the door; an instant later a fist pounded on the locked bathroom door. "Come out," squealed the irate Japanese head clerk, "or it will be worse for you. Oh, you will be beaten!"

Davies, buttoning his shirt, whistled to himself.

A deeper voice said, *"Machi wa Orosha shimanesu* . . . do not make me wait. I am a Russian officer, your friend, and you will not be hurt."

That would be Ogrodowski, decided Lew, as he picked up his tie. He thought, *I don't see why I didn't put cigarettes in the bag.*

"If you don't break down the door," snapped another voice, "the damned fool'll stay there until he rots. I've lived in the Orient most of my life," continued the speaker, "and this is the first time a pariah has ever stolen anything."

"When a man is downtrodden and hungry," another man retorted, "and we do nothing to assist him, what do you expect?"

What do you know? Lew told himself. The first speaker was Simpson or Gentry, one of the Asia-style racketeers; but the second voice was Ashton's. *Right along to see what happens,* decided Davies, *and I wouldn't be a damned bit surprised if Ogrodowski tipped him off that I was here. Not that it matters now.*

Davies turned to the mirror over the washbowl and went to work on his tie. He grinned at the face he saw. No beard. No matted hair. He was looking at Llewelyn Davies again, a little darker from sun, a little more gaunt, and very tired. But feeling pretty damned good.

THE wait, he could guess, was while an axe was being brought so that the door could be smashed down. He finished putting on his uniform, belted himself but not with the old hole, because he was thinner, patted his holster, and picked up his cap.

A word from outside brought him up short. He had been inattentive to whatever had been previously said, because he knew now that the principal people involved in what had started in Tokyo must all be outside waiting to see the pariah.

"Not the slightest cooperation," the Russian captain was saying. "Interference. Stubborn interference. And when we prepare to do something, without American assistance, he slips

away, this Major Davies gone off fishing."

I caught something, thought Lew.

"Our own Professor Kajenski is expected in Sapporo," continued the Russian. "A famous and learned man. A great chemist. He can help the poor pariahs. But will he be able to combat the—the—"

"The stupidity of this Davies?" said Ashton. "You needn't tell me about him, Captain. I've seen an example of his stupidity. Only he won't be able to prevent making Japan a nation of the people, Captain Ogrodowski. I think that I can guarantee that! We, as members of the people ourselves, no longer need Davies or his like to tell us what to do!"

Davies opened the door and stepped out.

A fly buzzing on the windowpane was the one sound for immeasurable time. Then Davies was saying softly, "Simpson, Gentry, you two next to them, don't move," and everyone could see that the American had a gun in his hand. "Search them," ordered Major Davies; men in American uniforms did so.

The buzzing of the fly seemed to grow and grow, only it was not a buzzing at all, but the hiss of indrawn breaths. The bathroom door was open; there was not a sign of an Ainu within.

"Oh, where can be?" whispered the head clerk, beginning to tremble. "Ainu go in . . . *Amerika-jin* come out! Oh, where are gone? Elsewhere?"

Davies said, "Why not go look?"

He strode over to the four men, nodding to a G-2 officer up from Tokyo who had helped disarm the four. Swiftly, roughly, Davies ripped buttons from Simpson's shirt in order to expose the man's chest. The scorpion mark was there; and it'd be on the other men's chests, too, Davies knew. The gang mark.

"What in hell're you doin'?" snarled Simpson.

Davies said, "Explain the scar."

"That? Why, you ass, that's *moxa.* Had a Jap physician. Anybody who's been in Japan for more than five minutes knows what *moxa's* for." It was at that moment the renegade must have recalled exactly what Major Davies had said at the saloon, concerning fishing and Ikadebetsu, because fear replaced the rage which had burned in Simpson's eyes. He said, "Ah," and that was all.

"Does Professor Kajenski know?" asked Lew.

"What do you say of him?" demanded the Russian captain.

Ashton bustled forward. "I am well acquainted with the professor," he insisted, "and I don't propose to have his work interfered with because of the stupidity of a man like yourself, Major. So let's have it clear now—"

"It will be clear to you shortly," said Lew grimly. He turned to Ogrodowski. "And to you as well, Captain. It will surprise you."

'Coming from an officer of your type," interrupted Ashton, "it will probably be as clear as what happened to the Ainu."

Davies suggested, "If he came in through the transom, maybe that's the way that he left. All I know is that I didn't see him in this room."

But I saw him in the bathroom mirror, thought Lew, *and he looked like hell.* He had orders to give, concerning Ikadebetsu, and wires to get off to Tokyo so there would be action at Nineteen. But right this moment something was pretty important.

"Who's got a cigarette?" asked Major Davies.

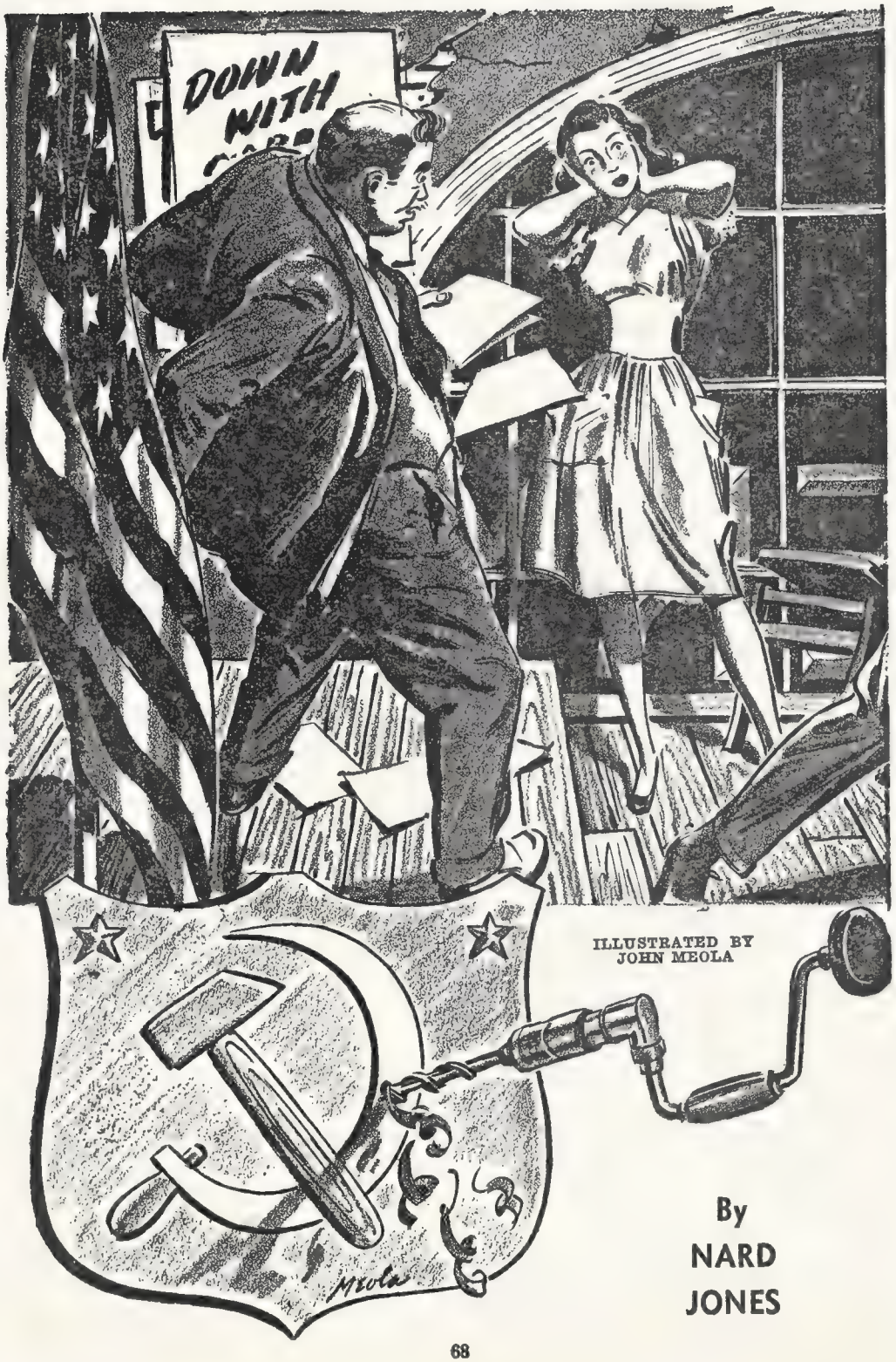
As a G-2 officer snapped flame to a lighter, and Davies took the first deep inhalation, the Intelligence officer winked briefly.

"Remember this," said Ashton, "when Professor Kajenski arrives, I intend to see to it that although his opinions regarding Japanese occupation do not conform with your general's, he is to be afforded every courtesy."

"I'll see to it," promised Davies. "There will even be a reception committee, sir. I wish," added Lew, "that I could do for you what I'll do for the professor." *What a tangled web,* thought Davies. *Renegades of all nations. And these boys have so managed to mix a damnable racket with political ideologies that it was hard to tell where one began and the other left off. And they had damned jackasses such as this one to help them.* "I'll take care of the professor," repeated Lew.

Ashton did not soften. He pressed what looked like an advantage by saying, "I suggest that you give him a dinner, Major Davies."

"Dinner?" said Lew. "Dinner?" He sighed deeply. "Dinner," said the man who had been Koropok, "would be wonderful . . . right now!"



ILLUSTRATED BY
JOHN MEOLA

By
NARD
JONES

THE BORE FROM WITHIN

I felt good because Jakey was sore at me and I could swing at him—so I swung at him.

I CAN remember just when I first began to hate the rich.

Of course, for a long while I forgot about it; but the time came when I remembered how it all started. I was about thirteen and I was going past Pinky Anderson's house on Alder Street. Pinky lived in a great big white house that sat back from the walk and I guess his old man had more money than anybody in town. Well, anyhow, Pinky and another kid

were sitting on the steps and they each had a package of those candy wafers that used to come in all different colors. They were sitting there—Pinky was kind of fat and pink, which was why we called him Pinky—and I watched them.

Every time they got to a white wafer they would throw it away. I guess they decided they just liked the colored ones. I had never thought much of Pinky anyhow, and it kind of made me sore, it was so wasteful. I just walked on, pretending I didn't see them.

That was over ten years ago, and I never thought much about it until this thing came up with J. Fuller Huntley and his secretary, a girl by the name of Donna Smith.

Unless you live in Montavilla (population 38,455) you may not have heard of J. Fuller Huntley, but he is quite a figure. He is president of the Huntley Stop-Nut and Spiral Nail Company which is the largest industry in the county and one of the biggest in our state. He is my boss, or at least he was my boss, and this Donna Smith person is my girl. Or was.

You see, I worked for the Huntley Stop-Nut people before I joined the Army, only I was just a stockroom kid then. When I came back the old man said, "You are all matured now, George, and you have a lot of experience. Maybe it was not experience putting over Huntley Stop-Nuts and Spiral Nails—"

"Maybe it was not, definitely," I said.

He went right on, the way he does, like he was making a speech. In fact, the old man is quite a speech maker. That is how he come to be president of the County and Municipal League, and it is also why he is a member of just about every discussion club there is in Montavilla. "Maybe it was not the kind of experience we need here *exactly*," he said, "but I have a lot of confidence in a boy who can take up one of those big bombers—"

"I was in the infantry," I reminded him. "We didn't take up anything except our feet, J. F. We just took them up and set 'em right down again."

"Quite right." He never even heard me. He never hears anybody but himself. "I am going to put you on the sales force, not in the stockroom," he went on. "And who knows but what you will one day become sales *manager?*"

"Well," I said, "for one thing, the sales manager knows it, because he is your son-in-law. And if one day you made me sales manager you would have to make him president of the company, otherwise your life would not be worth a cent."

Maybe I talk too much. That's what my mother used to tell me, and that's what they told me in the Army, especially my sergeant. That is what Donna Smith says, too, but I always figure what the hell, if you think it why not say it? However, the old man did not appreciate my crack about his son-in-law, and I would not be surprised if he did not call a strike on me right then although he gave me the job.

I TRIED to do my best, but I found out that selling stop-nuts and spiral nails is different from heaving boxes of them around in a stockroom. I can see how a guy could sell an automobile or even a vacuum cleaner, if they were making them any more, but what can you say about a stop-nut or a spiral nail? I could not figure out anything to say about them, and especially when the prospect would say that he could get them cheaper, and just as good, from the Valley Forge and Bolt Works. Whenever that happened I would just laugh lightly and take him over to the nearest bar and buy him a few drinks. Sometimes I would sign him up there, and sometimes I would get to liking him so much that I would decide he ought to save money by patronizing Valley Forge.

One morning I ran into Donna in the corner drug store where I had sneaked in to get a cup of coffee and she had done the same. "George," she said, squirming onto the stool next to mine, "J. F. is not very satisfied with your work."

"That makes it mutual," I said. "I am not, either."

Donna looked at me with the wide blue eyes that I had thought of quite a bit, along with other things of hers, in some of the better foxholes. "George, he mentioned that he does not think you are quite adjusted yet. Are you?"

"I am as well adjusted as he is," I said. "Look, my little sharpy, that guy has not been adjusted since he got his first pair of long pants. He doesn't know whether he wants to be president of the Huntley Stop-Nut and Spiral Nail Company or Hamlet. Every time he gets up off his fat—every time he gets up off his chair he makes a speech. If he had cloves on his breath I would think he was a Congressman. He—"

"George!" said Donna, flashing her eyes. "One of the first things you must learn is to be loyal to your employer and your company. Mr. Huntley talks a lot because he has ideas. He isn't like the average business man. He looks beyond the horizons. He is interested in other things besides making money."

"What, for instance?" I asked.

"Well, things like world trade, and the brotherhood of man, and the United Nations conferences, and—"

"Basic English," I said gloomily. "The other day he told me the troubles of the world would be over if every country spoke Basic English. I think I have been speaking Basic English all

my life and my troubles are definitely not over."

"They aren't unless you start doing some selling," said Donna. "And also, your expense accounts are much too high."

"Does J. F. expect me to bring along a box from home and hand a customer a piece of soggy pie for lunch?"

"He doesn't expect you to take them all to the fanciest bars and stay all afternoon."

I buried my nose in the java. It began to look to me as if Donna and J. F. were on the same side and it wasn't mine. "George," Donna said suddenly, "what are you thinking?"

"I was just thinking maybe I should have stayed in the Army."

That did it. I don't know why, but she whips off the stool and dips out the door in a streak of blond hair and red skirt. I ordered another cup of coffee and tried to think. It is kind of hard to think after you been in the infantry for almost four years, on account of they do all your thinking for you in the infantry. I tried to decide whether I really wished I was back in the Army, or whether I wished I was back in the stockroom. I tried to figure whether I wanted to marry Donna and get all fastened down to an apartment, if we could find one, or whether I wanted to just kind of take it free and easy. Then I tried to decide whether I just didn't like selling stop-nuts or whether I was plain lazy. It was the full ten rounds and no decision. I didn't know what I wanted. I was just a guy with a Ruptured Duck in his lapel and neither me nor the Duck was straightened out and flying right yet.

Just then something hits me on the back and I sprayed black coffee clear to the mirror back of the soda fountain. It was a palm that hit me, and it belonged to Jakey Burrows. I hadn't seen him since high school and he looked just about the same except he needed a haircut as bad as Errol Flynn. He asked me how it was with me and I told him, and then I asked him how it was with him.

"Fine," he said. "I just dropped in for a coke and then I am going down to the Hall and make a speech."

"Ye gods," I said, "you making speeches, too? I work for a guy that makes speeches. What you making speeches about?"

"I'm making a talk for the Party," he said. "Want to come?"

"I am always ready for a party," I said. "Especially now."

Jakey glowered at me. "I see you haven't changed much. When are you going to become aware of the forces at work in the world?"

"Jakey, I got a headache. I have already been trying to think. Just give it to me slow and easy. What in the hell are you talking about?"

Jakey Burrows took a deep breath and ran his fingers through his fright wig, not taking off his hat because he did not wear any hat. "Why don't you come down to the Hall and hear my speech? That may enlighten you."

Well, I knew I ought to be over on the other side of town seeing some customers, but somehow the very fact that I had a conscience made me sore. So I said, "O.K., Jakey. Lead on."

I SNOW I have lived in Montavilla all my life, but you learn something every day. The "Hall" that Jakey was talking about was the big upstairs room over Glotzbeiner's Bakery. There were a bunch of folding chairs and they were all occupied by guys, and a half a dozen broads. Most of the guys looked like they might be understudying Jakey and they had the same kind of a gleam in their eyes that he had. I tumbled that I was in a meeting of the Communist Party and I hadn't even figured there were any Commies in Montavilla.

The chairman was a tall guy who looked a little like a professor, and he reported on some meeting that had been held and told about some that were coming up. Then he introduced Jakey. I couldn't get over people coming to hear Jakey Burrows make a speech at eleven o'clock in the morning, but when he got going I had to admit that he was sure interesting.

He described the capitalistic system, and then he described a company that certainly sounded like the Huntley Stop-Nut and Spiral Nail Company. Finally he went on to tell what a capitalist was and I couldn't help thinking, "That sure is old J. F. himself, and no mistake."

Then Jakey told how some guys, without ever knowing it, get to be pawns of guys like J. F. and the first thing they know it is too late to do anything about it. They are just victims of the system, and the way Jakey explained it, they are worse than the capitalists because they let themselves be used to keep building up the evil. I began to feel like a worm. I began to feel like everybody in that hall was looking at me and thinking, "There he is—just a tool for old J. F. Huntley." But they weren't looking at me. They were looking at Jakey and they were listening hard at him, too.

After the meeting, Jakey and I went down to the corner to Ben's Place and had a beer. "Well, what did you think?" asked Jakey.

"I don't know," I said. "I never took much interest in politics."

Jakey got a bead on me with that gleam in his eyes. "This is bigger than politics. It's time you took an interest in the world, George. We need veterans like you. Why don't you join us? We got a place for you, George."

"How much does it pay?" I asked.

Jakey looked kind of pained. "I can see I got to you just in time. You got a chance to be a part of something, to take a place in the movement, and you want to know what it pays. Listen, I want to read you something."

Jakey took a dog-eared pamphlet out of his pocket and he began reading. There was a lot of stuff about "vested interests" and "capitalistic slaves" and about how us comrades could stand shoulder to shoulder and march into the future. There was a lot of other stuff and Jakey could make it sound awful interesting. When he got through he said, "Look, I can get you a job down at the office where they print *The Screech*—that's our paper in Montavilla, comes out every Friday. Twenty-five dollars a week and you can move in the flat with me and share expenses and tell the Huntley Stop-Nut Company where to jump off at."

"That part of it would appeal to me," I admitted.

"And you can tell old J. F. that you are going to become a force instead of just a stooge. Look here, George, what were you in the Army? Just a number, that's all. They told you what to do and when to do it, and now you come back home and you start working for Huntley. And what are you?"

"Just a number," I said. "On the big black board where it tells how the salesmen are doing. I am Number Thirteen."

"There you are," smiled Jakey. "Now how about joining *The Screech*? You know what? I would not be surprised if you get to be a big man in the movement." He slapped me on the back, and somehow I got to remembering Pinky Anderson and those white wafers.

"Jakey," I said, "I will bring my suitcase down to your flat tonight."

I hot-footed it right back to the Huntley plant and I sailed into the boss s office. Donna was sitting by his desk taking dictation, so I thought I would just give it to her, too, and save some time. She had kind of got my goat with that crack about my not being adjusted, and the way she swooshed out of the drug store and all.

"J. F.," I said, "I am finished with the Huntley Stop-Nut and Spiral Nail Company. I am done. Finished. *Kaput.*"

The boss looked up like a surprised walrus and Donna dropped her notebook. I retrieved it for her, slow and graceful, like a guy in the movies picking up a dame's handkerchief. I was kind of enjoying myself. This was the stuff, all right.

"Well, well!" said J. F. "You have another opportunity, I suppose?"

"I certainly do have."

"You're not going over to the Valley Forge people?" he asked.

I laughed in a superior fashion. "That capitalistic vestige? I should say not! Why, they are as much a part of the rotten system as *this* treadmill."

J. F. got up, spluttering. "George, what kind of talk is that? Just what are you getting at? Why are you quitting—not that I haven't been on the edge of firing you, anyhow—and where are you going?"

"I am not going to be just a number," I said, looking at Donna. "From now on I am going to be a force instead of just a stooge." I folded my arms. "I don't even want the salary you owe me—"

"*Salary I owe you?* Why, you—look here, I have just been over your account, and you have drawn so much for expenses that you now owe *us.*"

"I wouldn't take it, anyhow," I said. "It's tainted money. It's the sweat of slaves out there in the plant, that's what it is."

Donna slammed down her notebook and shook me by the arm. "George, have you been drinking? If you have, I'll never speak to you again. And if you are sober and can talk like you are talking now, why then I don't want to speak to you again, anyhow."

I stepped back away from her. "You have become infected by the system, Miss Smith."

She gasped. "George! George, you're a *Communist!*"

I bowed. "Be sure to read *The Screech,*" I said. I did not mean to knock the water pitcher off the boss's desk as I turned to go, but I do not think that this took away from the dignity of the thing. I think it showed J. F. and Donna that I simply did not give a damn now that I was unshackled from my fetters, or unfettered from my shackles, or whatever it was that Jakey's pamphlet had said I would be when I got loose from the system.

WHEN I got to Jakey's flat I was a little surprised, on account of he did not have the whole flat but only the back room. Also there was only a cot in the room, and Jakey had a good deal of stuff around. But he certainly made me feel welcome, and he said a guy with so much Army experience would not mind sleeping on the floor on a couple of extra blankets he had.

"If I had known things were so cozy here," I said, "I would not have given up my apartment. There were only twenty applicants waiting in line to get in when I came out, so I can't go back. And an apartment is not something you just pick up with the milk in the morning."

"Now one thing we don't tolerate is griping," Jakey told me. "You have to make sacrifices, George. The movement means work and sacrifice. You want to think of it as testing yourself, as finding out whether you are sincere."

Well, that was O.K. with me, and so next

morning I went down with him to the office of *The Screech*. I don't know why, but I had figured I would be maybe doing pieces for the paper. Not being familiar with the newspaper business I could not figure what else a guy would do on one except pieces. I was quite astonished when I found out that I was supposed to carry copies around and try to sell them either singly or in bunches to newsstand guys. "Most of the newsstand guys won't want them," Jakey told me, "but you want to try to make them take some."

Now if I had figured to sell newspapers, which I had not figured, I would have been selling the *Montavilla Daily Call* or the *Intelligencer-Gazette*. But I did not mention this to the editor of *The Screech* because he was a large guy who did not act as if he liked anybody and especially me. Besides, I said to myself, "George, you have got yourself into this and now you had better go ahead with it."

I got kind of worried the first week because I could not get rid of very many copies of *The Screech*. But I found out the editor did not expect that I would sell very many of them. "There are a lot of pigs in this town," he said. "Pigs who prefer the capitalistic slop of the blankety-blank capitalistic press."

"Well, now," I said, "my old man always used to read the *Call*. It hates a Republican almost like poison—"

"Bah!" the editor said. "Don't you know that halfway measures are worse than nothing at all? I would say the *Call* is a Socialist paper if it is not just a New Deal paper and we hate them all."

"Oh," I said, wondering what my old man would think if he was alive. But just then Jakey came in, beaming all over. "George," he said, "what do you imagine has happened?"

"You have got another cot in your room—I hope."

He ignored that. "I have got a job in the Huntley Stop-Nut and Spiral Nail Company!"

I sat down hard on a box. "I know," said Jakey, smiling. "You don't understand. We bore from within. I will be able to do a lot of good for the cause by working inside the Huntley plant."

"Well, I was already there," I said. "Why couldn't I do some boring for the cause?"

Jakey and the editor shook their heads. "Not enough experience," Jakey said. "You have much yet to learn."

Well, that night when Jakey and I were going to bed—that is, when he was going to bed and I was going to the floor—I learned something, all right. "You should see the babe that J. F. Huntley has for a secretary, or did you?"

"Of course I did. In fact, she was my girl."

"The hell you say!" said Jakey and then he rolled over and pretended he was asleep.

The next afternoon when I got back from *The Screech* office I found Jakey getting on a clean shirt, which was something he did not often bother to do. "George," he said, "I have got some good news for you. I will probably be out tonight until midnight or maybe even one or two o'clock, and until I get home you might as well use the cot instead of sleeping on the floor."

I don't know what it was, but something told me something.

"Jakey," I said, "how is your boring from within coming?"

"Oh, fine. Fine." He went on tying one of my neckties around his neck which I noticed had been watered and shaved for a change. He looked at me a little nervously and said, "I have been working on Miss Smith, the boss's secretary. Very subtly, of course. She has great influence over the old man and he does have a great curiosity about things. If I can indoctrinate her—"

"Do what?" I said.

"Indoctrinate her. With the ideals of the Party. If I can do that, then perhaps she can influence him. You know, it would be a great and wonderful thing if we could convert a man like Huntley. That would be really boring from within."

"That would be smoking Mexican reefers," I said.

"No, it might be done. Think of the furor it would cause among the other industrialists of Montavilla! We need a wealthy man with us in this town. Donna—that is, Miss Smith, says she often discusses books with the old man. So I am giving her some of our publications to read."

"Maybe you are going to read them with her tonight?" I suggested.

Jakey smiled and put on a new hat. "No, my boy. I am going to take her dancing at the Petrified Poodle. So I won't be home until late and you might as well use the cot. I'll be sure to waken you when I come in."

"Be sure to," I said.

Well, I began to get plenty burned at Jakey Burrows. I guess I am slow to take fire, but when I do I certainly burn. I kept pounding the pavements with *The Screech* and when it wasn't that it was carrying type forms for the editor.

I was getting a measly twenty-five bucks a week, while Jakey was boring from within at Huntley's for seventy-five fifty per five days. Furthermore, he was getting his hair cut and he was giving me the cot awful regularly, sometimes up until three o'clock in the morning.

Also, he was doing an awful lot of whistling around the back room of the flat, which can be very annoying in a small space. Anyhow, it does not seem to me that a Communist should be doing much whistling.

ONE day I said to him, "Jakey, it comes to me gradually that you are getting to act and look more like a capitalist every day. And if it is all the same to you, I would just as soon sleep on the floor the whole night. I am used to it now, and there is no need for you to put yourself out by staying around and about so late."

Jakey looked at me. "Say . . . Donna mentions you once in a while. You're not jealous, are you?"

"Donna and I don't mean anything to each other," I said. "But I am wondering how you are coming with this business of influencing her to influence old man Huntley."

For a long time he didn't say anything. Then he kind of drew himself up and announced: "I can see you have been doubting me, George. That pains me. But I want you to know that next Friday night Mr. J. Fuller Huntley will attend our meeting!"

I got to admit that it flabbergasted me. While I was waving my jaw, Jakey went on: "What's more, he's going to make a speech. He's going to compare some of the aspects of the Communist system with the capitalistic system. Brother, he loves to make speeches. And once we get him making speeches, once we give him a listen real respectfully, he's a goner."

"You did all this through Donna Smith?" I asked him.

"I certainly did. And do you know something? I believe I have about got her convinced that we are right." Jakey smiled and his big teeth flashed handsome. "I am a salesman, no question about it, when it comes to women."

There was something about the way he said that. I don't know. Just something. I almost poked him in the nose, but not quite. Anyhow, I did not more than half believe that J. F. would be at the meeting. It seemed to me about as likely a thing to happen as it would that President Truman would call me up and say, "George, there are a couple of things I want to get your advice on, and can you come right down to the White House?"

But, sure enough, next Friday night old J. F. was in the Hall above Glotzbeiner's Bakery—and Donna was with him, too! You could have knocked me over with a hammer and sickle. Donna eyed me once or twice, but I just stayed over near the wall and never gave her a tumble.

After the secretary had read the minutes of the previous meeting, and we had voted to burn them up, Jakey Burrows gets up and gives J. F. a long introduction in which he calls him "one of the enlightened business leaders of the nation" and I thought J. F. was going to float right out of his blue serge threads. He can hardly wait until Jake is through with the introduction, and the next thing I know he is off to the races and my eyes are beginning to glaze.

However, my eyes did not glaze so badly that I failed to notice some of the folks coming into the Hall while the old man was making a speech. There were several men and women and they filed in sort of sheepish and I saw who they were. Every one of the men was a hot shot business man in Montavilla and as conservative as a pair of long drawers on an old maid. They were all members of the County and Municipal League of which J. F. was president. The women were from the Parent-Teachers' Association and I recognized one as Amy Leek who had married Pinky Anderson and would not be caught dead in a cloth coat.

Right away I figured what had happened. Jakey Burrows had tipped them off that J. F. was going to make a speech and they had come up to see for themselves. Jake had figured that J. F. would be caught with his breeches down and would not ever dare to walk back. Well, sir, the old man was so busy reading his speech that he never noticed who had come into the back of the Hall, and all of a sudden I began to feel sorry for him. He was so dog-goned sincere and trying to tie up his ideas with Jakey's ideas, or rather the ideas in Jakey's books. All of a sudden it come over me that maybe old J. F. was just as kind of confused as I was when I got out of the Army, only he did not show it so much. Besides, he just could not resist a chance to make a speech.

It began to make me mad. And when I thought about how he would not be there if Donna had not talked him into it, and about how Jakey had talked *her* into it, I got still madder. I looked over at Jakey, sitting behind the speaker's table, and he had a sly grin on his pan that made me want to unassemble him and put the parts in a dozen boxes.

I thought old J. F. would never get done. He rambled on, and I could see that nobody in the Hall, not either the Comrades or the visitors against the back wall, knew just what he was talking about. I don't think the old man knew, either. He had just written himself a speech about different kinds of governments and he was giving with it. But I knew that the simple fact that he was there at all would cook his goose with the folks in the back of the room.

All of a sudden the old man wheezed a couple of times, like a tire going down, and I knew he was finished. Also, I knew what I had to do.

I remembered back to a day in Paris, just before I got back across, when there was a mass meeting of guys protesting that they ought to be shipped home. A wild-eyed guy got up on a statue and he gave a speech and everybody was cheering and he was all for us marching

the hell right down to a boat and coming home. But right afterward a sergeant jumps up on the statue and he said, "The man is absolutely right . . ." and then he gave all the reasons why we *shouldn't* hold a protest meeting—and what I recollected was that it worked.

So I just walked up to the table, quick-like, before Jakey could get off his chair, and I said, "Fellow comrades . . ." and once I got started Jakey couldn't stop me because that was against the rules.

"Fellow comrades," I said, "we have all heard what Mr. Huntley has said, and by listening to him we have showed how broad-minded we are. But we all know that we do not agree with him. He is for the old capitalistic system and we are against it because we know it stinks."

I could see old J. F. open his mouth in surprise, and the Comrades looked kind of vague and they were trying to remember what J. F. had said. But they did not remember very much what he said, because a Commie is no different from you and me. He does not remember what a guy has said in a speech five minutes after the gong rings.

"Mr. Huntley has told us that he thinks our plan will not work in this country, but we know it will." Of course, J. F. had not said anything of the kind, but I kept right on batting at it for a minute or two. Then I said, "I thank you," and walked to the back of the room where Amy Leek Anderson was standing.

"George," she said, eyeing me, "what are you trying to do? I guess I could hear what Mr. Huntley said. He was trying to reconcile the democratic way of life with the Communistic system and I certainly intend to make a report to the Parent-Teachers' Association."

"Amy," I said in a low voice, "I have not seen you since the high school senior picnic up Mill Creek. Do you happen to recollect that high school senior picnic up Mill Creek?"

Well, Amy Leek Anderson got red from her bonnet right down to the collar of her mink and I knew that she recollected all right. "I do not think you ought to make any report to the Parent-Teachers' Association and what is furthermore, I think that if any of these gentlemen here decide to give old J. F. the hot-foot you should have your husband, Pinky, go around and talk to them."

"George," Amy said, keeping her voice as low as mine, "I won't be blackmailed."

I just pretended I did not hear her. "Every business man in the county will listen to Pinky," I said. "Some day I must drop around and see Pinky just for old times' sake. I guess I have not seen him since high school."

BY this time there was quite a commotion in the Hall. The Comrades were arguing among themselves about the speeches, and I saw Jakey pushing through the mob. He made a bee-line for me and he did not look happy. "What," he said, "is the big idea, you blankety-blank boorshwa bore? Were you trying to break up the meeting?"

"Boorshwa yourself," I said. "I am just doing a little boring from within, so I guess I am a bore, ha-ha." I was really laughing. I felt good, because Jakey was sore at me and I could swing at him. So I swung at him and he lit right on the seat of his pants and Amy screamed, and then Jakey got up and we went at it.

Well, you know how it is when that happens. Somebody tried to help Jakey, and then somebody tried to help me, and pretty soon there were half a dozen fights, all going pretty good. Somebody broke a window, and that was when Glotzbeiner down in his bakery called the cops. When the cops came the Comrades began calling them "Cossacks" and so they gave us all a ride in three of Montavilla's best wagons. I did not mind this very much because they took Jakey to the wagon by his head and feet, and his arms were dangling down just the way I had knocked them.

J. F. and Donna were riding in the same wagon with me, and the old man was plenty worried. "I'm ruined," he said. "Ruined."

"You are not either ruined," I told him. "Because when we get to the bastille I will bet you even money that Mrs. Pinky Anderson is going to telephone her husband and explain the whole brawl and we will all be sprung. Furthermore, I will bet that Pinky fixes it with the newspapers, except maybe *The Screech* and nobody reads that, anyhow."

Donna was looking at me. "George," she said, "George, I want you to know that the only reason I got interested in what Jakey told me was because I wanted to know what you were doing. Honest, that was the only reason. George, *you* didn't believe in all that stuff, did you?"

"Nope," I said. "I was just boring from within."

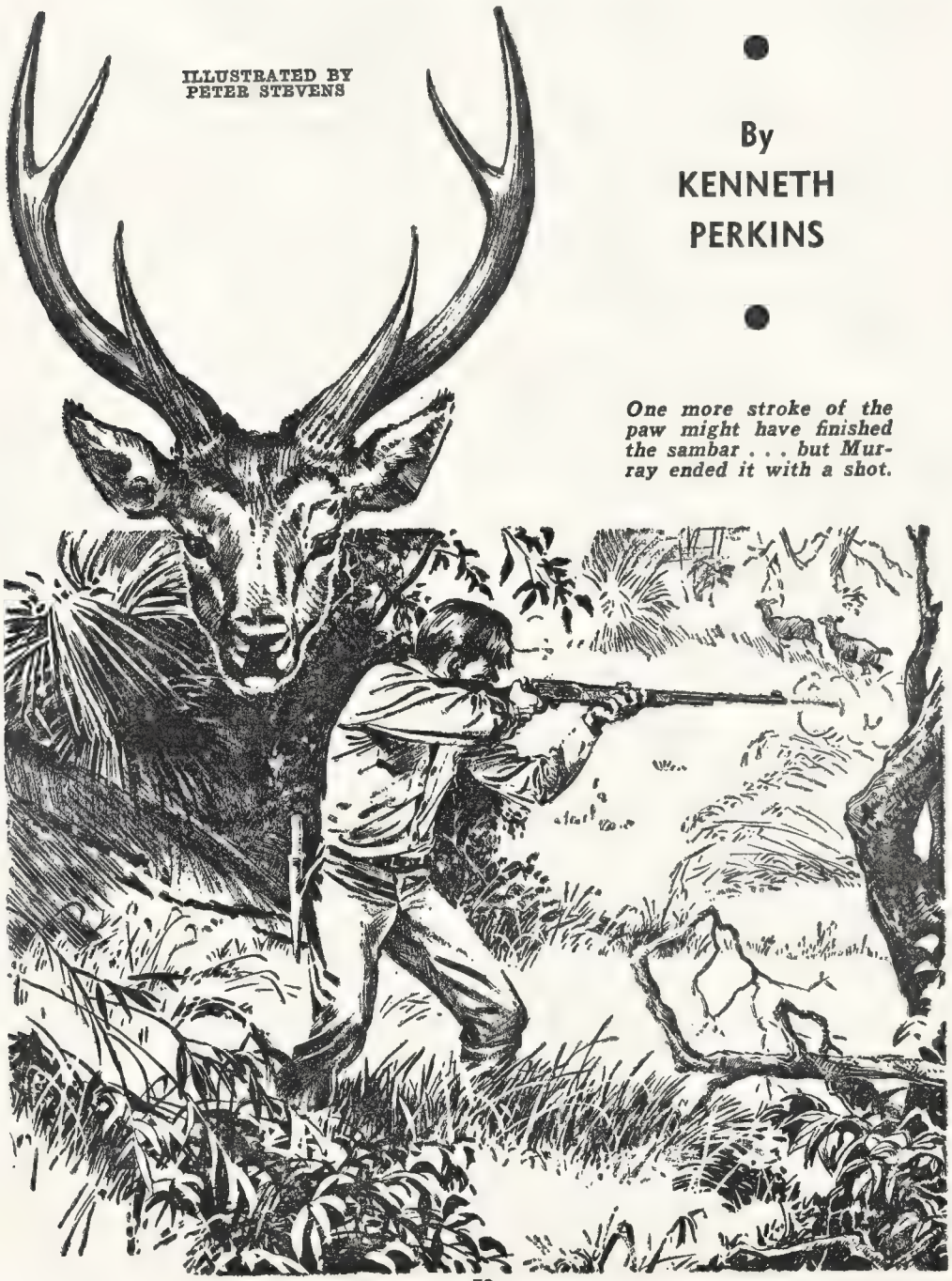
All of a sudden she leaned across the wagon aisle and kissed me hard. It made me feel pretty good. I felt like having another go at that salesman's job. When Donna leaned over there and kissed me hard, I sure felt like as if I was adjusted now.

JIM SAHIB AND THE

ILLUSTRATED BY
PETER STEVENS

By
KENNETH
PERKINS

One more stroke of the paw might have finished the sambar . . . but Murray ended it with a shot.



MAGIC HORNS

THE buck lagged far behind his does even though they stopped repeatedly and turned, freezing. They froze for several seconds, staring back at the hiding place of their fawns, then again they bounced away on the monsoon wind. They had fled one mortal enemy, but here was another and a greater—a man.

Jim Murray knew by the unspotted, chocolate colored fawns and by the size and antlers of the buck that these were sambar. The antlers with their three massive tines were wanted by the Khan Sahib, hence much depended on the shot. In fact Murray felt that his whole future depended on it. His past was behind him as it was behind many of the Americans who built the Burma and Ledo Roads. Like many others he was on his way to Calcutta to wait for a ship to take him home; but if this shot missed—well, it could not miss.

The Khan Sahib of Bangoor was troubled with the gout. The British civil surgeon had been unable to bring relief, so had the American missionary doctor and the Moslem hakim. A Chinese doctor, however, had cured him of several attacks with an ancient specific made from the horns of a sambar cut in strips and brewed in herbs and spirits. There was little hope of bagging a sambar now that the rains had started, nevertheless the hunt was on.

One buck was raised from a covert of bamboo but he had vanished in the monsoon mist, leaving no mark in the sodden ground. Indeed there were no deer tracks anywhere for there had been a curious exodus from the district. Swamp deer and antelope had vanished almost overnight. So had the little barking deer, or at least they were silent.

Murray stuck to the chase after most of the hunters gave up, baffled. With his *shikari* he

circled the groves where sambar browsed on wild mango. He cut across every riverbed where they grazed on jungle rice and broom. He beat into thickets where the does hid their fawns during the day. He searched for spoor along the mud channels of the new monsoon and here he ran into another hunter.

The Reverend Dr. Botts was a leathery man with a handlebar mustache who reminded Murray of a Western sheriff. All he needed was a sombrero instead of that battered topi.

"Brother, if you can read sign in this mud, you beat me," the Reverend said. "Besides the mud's dangerous." He pointed to a tent on the hillside. "Another hunter just sent his *shikari* to fetch me. Cracked his shoulder trying to race the sambar before taking a shot. That's the English in him."

"You mean he saw the buck?" Murray asked eagerly.

"He saw the white patch on his rump and nothing more. You can't see his brown hide in this weather. Fades out like my magic lantern slides to another picture. Anyway come along and have some tea."

"If he saw the buck, it's no time for tea!"

"That's the American of it." But he persuaded Murray to stop long enough for the guides to swap notes.

INSIDE the tent a purple-faced Englishman lay on a cot swigging steadily at whiskey pegs.

"My whaler could have run the buck down," he said as Botts doctored him. "Any good horse can beat a sambar in the open. Not in the jungle though and that's where he is now." He looked up at Murray, studying him from his pith helmet down his long Yankee frame and grass-stained, mud-caked clothes. "So you're having a go at him, too?" he said grinning through his teeth. "Know anything about the jungle?"

"He knows it from Ledo to Chungking anyway," the missionary said. "He's slept in it and breathed it and steamed and stewed in it for three years. It's in his blood and his liver—if you ask me, a doctor."

"I'll ask something else. Did you ever see a sambar?"

"I know what they look like," Murray said, feeling himself on the mat. "Like an elk except for the antlers. The antlers aren't for looks but for killing."

"And they'll kill *you* unless you're good at tree climbing. Ever see swamp deer—the giant of the plains, we call 'em?" The Englishman did not wait for an answer. "The sambar is a foot taller than the giant of the plains. Seven hundred pounds. A regular right down giant. Easy to hit—except there's a trick to it. Grazes in the open only at night. Doesn't graze much anyway. Feeds on vegetables instead of this millet on the plains. That's why you can't find him along the rivers. He doesn't need water like other deer. And yet you think you can bag one!"

Botts chuckled as he worked. "No one knows how to shoot a sambar except an Englishman."

"Not even an Englishman," Unsley conceded as Botts gave him a hypodermic. "I mean to say not *this* sambar. He got wind of me even though he was to windward. Lifted his head and sniffed and gave a loud ponk, just a ponk. Not this dashed thundering roar you hear during the rut. Snapped at his does as much as to say, 'There he is!' "

"There he is—an Englishman," Botts added. "You thought you were to windward. Up here in the hills you can't bank on the southeast monsoon. Not with these back drafts from the *nullahs*. Ever try sailing in a mountain lake?"

"You can't bag him!" Unsley shouted. "And these channels are mud traps. I'm advising both of you."

"You aren't advising me," the Reverend Botts said. "I'm through. Got to take you home."

"That's the missionary of it," Murray said.

As the drug worked, Unsley was loquacious and thick-tongued. "There's nothing can catch that sambar in this wind except a leopard or a cheetah. Something like that's tracking him now in case you want to know it. That's why there aren't any deer around. Not a cheetah of course. No more in Bengal. Perhaps it was bigger—old stripes himself."

Murray had a lot of time to think this over while the missionary set that fractured bone and Unsley sweated. "If there's only one thing—this leopard or whatever it is—that can track the buck, why can't I follow the leopard?"

"Isn't that a Yankee for you?" The missionary laughed. "Not only sets his mind on winning but finds the right trick to win."

The bone was set and Unsley stopped sweating. He said drowsily, "This means a lot to you, I daresay, getting those horns?"

"It'll mean something to the Khan."

"A lot of us wanted to curry favor with his nibs, the Khan Sahib. I want a lease for an airport. The doctor here wants to get a whack at his soul and probably a donation for a hospital on the side." Unsley groped for words, drowsing. He had made his confession under the influence of hypodermics and too many whiskey pegs, Murray knew. Because of his fractured shoulder, begotten from the love of sport, he had put himself at a disadvantage.

"Since the cards are on the table," Murray said, "I won't hide my reasons. The Khan's daughter has a classmate from Holyoke visiting her, girl from my home town, New York. She's out here for the Red Cross and that's how I met her up at Ledo. The competition's stiff and I want to meet her again before I go back to the States."

"And if you present his nibs with a pair of

horns," Unsley grunted, "you'll be his guest, no doubt, for as long as you want. Your motive is better than saving souls or getting a lease." He shouted for his *shikari*.

WHEN a grizzled, bowlegged Hindu came to the tent door Unsley said to him, "Mr. Murray wants to show me how to hunt sambar. Show him where we found the prints of that cat." He was half asleep as he mumbled, "The cool cheek of these Americans . . . don't even know what a sambar looks like!"

The guide led the way to a swamp formed by the first rains. The pug marks of some sort of a cat showed on the shore but in the mud they were indefinite in size though not in shape.

"Whatever this beast of prey was," the gray-bearded guide said, "he went across this *jheel*. As for me, I will go in the opposite direction and rejoin my master."

Murray followed the tracks of the beast of prey. His own guide helped him find the trail where the cat had crossed the swamp. It was a clear track of slime on shale heading off into a gully—a splendid trail, a pukka trail as the guide said. They followed it for five miles intermittently checking the new pools of the monsoon where the mud left prints on rocks or grass. There was much *doorba* grass as well as wild rice and reed where the sambar might have come to graze. In spots the grass had been newly pressed but was fast moving back to its natural position as it will in the muggy monsoon. The trail was hot.

But there were no split wedge tracks of deer. The sambar might have kept to the other side of the stream bed, for it was reasonable to suppose that the cat had followed not on their heels but on a parallel course. "Whether *chota bagh* or great *bagh*," the guide said, "it is their custom to follow not by scent but by sight and hearing."

Murray crossed the bed to check on this theory. He found the tracks of does, pointed and fine, where they had attempted to stay under cover. They were traveling at a slow speed judging by the depth of the prints which were shallow at the toe instead of at the heel.

"It is because of the fawns that we will catch up with them," the guide said. "Inasmuch as the fawns are dropped at the commencement of the rains it is possible they are newly born. Both does are mothers, for there are three—a simple deduction since sambar bear only two fawns at the most."

Remembering Unsley's opinion that a cat knows more about stalking sambar than a man, Murray stayed on the lee side of the valley. But the tracks disappeared at a new sink where they should have shown clearly.

"Doubtless the *bagh* is waiting here for his kill," the guide said, explaining that the *khor* ended abruptly two hundred yards further up, making what Murray called a box canyon.

Circling the new swamp he found a print on one side where the mud had partly dried in the heat of the long afternoon. Although it was not a large print, Murray remembered a principle of tracking back home in the States. In soft ground and at high speed a track is smaller than the foot that makes it.

At the same moment the *shikari* picked up another sign. A chilla tree on the border of the swamp showed fresh marks where the silver bark had been scratched in vertical strips. Whatever the cat was, it had sharpened its claws standing on its hind legs, its forepaws reaching to a height of eight feet. The guide yelled, "It is not a *chota bagh* but the great *bagh!*"

There was one other member of that hunting party of two men and two ponies who arrived at the same conclusion at the same time. Murray's pony gave a terrified whoof, reared, spun around and buckjumped down the stream bed. The rider held on, clutching his rifle in one hand, the reins in the other. There was no stopping the terrified horse until it plunged knee deep into the mire and floundered. Murray sprawled in the ooze up to his elbows but he still gripped his gun although it was buried a foot deep.

The guide saw the spill and started jabbering wildly that a Bengal was stalking in the grass.

"Get me out of here and then talk!" Murray yelled at him.

The guide did not dismount but uncoiled the tether to his pony, threw it, and let the pony do the hauling.

BY the time Murray reached the bank and gouged the green slime from his eyes, his horse had already rolled and kicked itself free of the mire. Murray staggered to his knees, standing spraddle-legged and dizzy. He started for his pony but water dripped from his hair and mud blinded him again. There was still more mud when he rubbed his fists in his eyes to clean them. It was by his sense of hearing that he knew his pony had resumed its mad bolt with the guide's pony in pursuit.

When Murray cleared the mud mask from his face he saw a flutter in the high grass not twenty yards away. He raised his rifle and tried frantically to release the safety but his hand kept sliding over mud. It was not mud but oily slime. The whole gun was slippery with slime, so were his hands. The rifle slid, squirmed like something alive as he brought the butt plate to his shoulder. The stock would not stay to his cheek when he pressed it, for the harder he pressed the more it slipped back against his ear. In those few seconds which had stretched to

an eternity he caught sight of the Bengal slinking over to the side of the gulch. It was just a moment's vision of black stripes against tawny yellow—the same color as the grass of the recent dry monsoon.

He could not be a man-eater for he had been stalking sambar, the hardest kill of all. But this Bengal was not running away. That might have been because he found himself to some degree cornered in the box canyon. And here was a man, mud-blackened and clumsy as a buffalo wallowing out of a swamp. Besides, every man-eater has to get his first man and find out that he is a kill that can neither bite nor gore, kick nor strangle nor run away!

With his safety released, Murray's forefinger screwed into the chunk of mud that choked the trigger guard. It was a miracle that that mud had not squeezed off a shot while he cleaned it! One shot might be all the Bengal would allow him, he reflected as his finger slid over the trigger. He tried not to move his arm but the twist of his hand brought a dry snarl from behind him. He whirled but saw nothing in the direction from which the snarl had come. To one side of him there was a shudder of grass tops which he saw from the corners of his eyes.

He had his gun up as he whirled again. But all he could see were two sambar does stamping at the grass, throwing up their heels. It was not only the rustle that made him turn but a short "ponk"! He could see no fawns but he judged that the does had just nosed them into the grass, chinning them and kicking at the ones that were too frightened to stay in hiding.

Murray wasted no slugs on the does for he had only four cartridges in the magazine and chamber. He was not hunting does anyway, nor was he hunting the Bengal for that matter. He was hunting that sambar buck who came prancing out of the thicket with a pompous stamping of earth and a tossing of murderous tines. Here was the prize of the hunt! The Khan Sahib of Bangoor did not want a tiger rug, he wanted those magic horns.

The does had bounded off down the valley decoying the Bengal from the hiding spot. Although the tiger leapt almost across the grass where the fawns were hidden, he did not see them, nor could he smell them. They were safe even from the jackals for they had no betraying scent like their parents. As the Bengal went off at a fast slouch the buck quartered across the trail, getting between the does and their pursuer. Murray had him in his sights but as he was ready to squeeze off a shot—an easy one—he saw what the buck was doing. He had deliberately bounded in front of the tiger, bugling his challenge in a shattering metallic roar.

The Bengal made an arc of orange and black leaping over the grass for the sambar's back, but he had not leapt from cover and onto the haunches, his usual method of killing. The buck was already spinning, changing ends as the Bengal landed on him. Although the claws sliced red lines down the dark brown, they failed to anchor there. The buck threw him, waited, pawing and panting as the Bengal leapt again. This time the tines ripped into the tiger's shoulder and tossed him howling.

It was an amazing toss, the sambar's shoulders and chunky neck using the horns as a lever. As the Bengal rolled in the high grass the buck followed giving a snort and a whistle of rage. The tiger met him, fighting not like a Bengal with both paws but with only one as a lion fights. A single stroke tore a chunk from the buck's withers for his head was low to the ground as he got in another good hook. One more stroke of the paw might have finished him but Murray threw his own shot into the game and ended it.

As the Bengal crept into the grass to die, the buck pranced off on the trail of his does. That shot had warned him that an enemy more dangerous than the great *bagh* loitered somewhere in this grass. The buck called to his mates although it was not the time of rut and the call was not his usual bellow but a bleating. He bleated with fear and with pain.

The does answered with a faint grunting low but did not wait for their wounded master for he had fallen from prancing to a heavy trudge. He was no longer lord and master but something helpless and there was no instinct to urge them to his help. Their instinct would be to follow a new and younger buck. They cared for nothing helpless except their own fawns tucked back there in a covert of cane.

MURRAY almost stepped on the fawns as he started to hike after the wounded buck. They lay with their noses packed to the ground but with enormous eyes turned upward pleading, fearful of the giant shadow of the man hanging over them. As the guide had said, they could not have been more than a few days old but they had some wisdom, developed since their breed began, which warned them to lie still. They knew in their bones that their mothers would come back to suckle them.

But they knew nothing of the father who had saved them. And it was probable that the father did not know them as his own for there are few bucks which like the roe, recognize their offspring. Nevertheless their father had fought for them. They had good blood in their veins, Murray thought as he went on hiking. Some day they would grow up and have horns that could kill a tiger or heal a rajah's gout.

He did not have to hike fast. He needed no whaler to run the buck down. He could walk him down. The buck stood panting, needing rest even though the trail declined. When he caught the scent of his pursuer he jumped a

few lengths, trudged, then stood again, his flanks twitching as if to shake off flies.

He was really twitching at flies a moment later, for they came because of those long gouged lines in his back. The wounds made a pattern exactly like the four marks on a squirrel—the beloved pet of the god Krishna. It was Krishna's hand that had stroked the squirrels and left that mark branding them as his own. Krishna had marked the buck with the same holy brand.

The buck was on his knees now but up again with a hissing snort as the man circled him. Murray circled him in order to head him back to the hiding place of the fawns. The does of course would come back and Murray judged that the buck would feel better if he had his family near him as he died.

The buck turned heavily, staggered down toward the new pools the rains had left. He sprawled, his nose reaching for water that had turned the color of his wounds in the quick sunset. He was up again, hearing or perhaps smelling his pursuer. But this time he went off only a length and then rolled.

Murray thought that this was the end but the buck kept rolling, smearing his back in buffalo dung—that universal panacea for native man or beast. This would stop some of the bleeding and keep off the night flies.

It was Murray who kept off the jackals. Needing rest himself he sat down backed against a log. The buck lay a dozen yards away from him, forelegs folded under the panting chest like a newly dropped fawn. And with the innocence or instinct of a fawn he might have sensed that someone was guarding him, for the jackals kept off.

The jackals circled, frustrated, some of them raging hungry, some of them surfeited with tiger meat further up the *khor*. There would not be much tiger skin left for a rug, Murray reflected, dozing.

He was guarding the wounded buck not only against jackals but against men as he discovered, jerking awake at the sound of hoofs. Through the trees and vines he saw oil lanterns wagging as a party of hunters rode toward him.

He ran out into the open bed to meet them. Evidently the news had spread that the American was hot on the sambar's trail. Murray's runaway guide had not only brought the missionary, Botts, but also several other sportsmen who had been about to drop out of the chase.

"Glad to find you alive, brother," Dr. Botts shouted. "A riderless horse, a frightened *shikari* babbling of a tiger—but here you are!"

"The tiger's up yonder, what the jackals left of him," Murray said simply.

One of the sportsmen, a rich East Indian, said, "As I vision the matter, sir, you killed the tiger with one shot, for that was all your *shikari* heard as he fled. Which leads me to ask what happened to the sambar?"

"He got away after he hooked that tiger," Murray said with the innocent eyes of a liar.

The East Indian exclaimed, "You mean you were in this *khor* and saw it? Then you must have been close enough for a shot."

Murray resorted to an old figure of speech. "There was a limb in the way." Then he said hotly, "I'll get the buck when I'm good and ready! Until then you can have the tiger's remains with my compliments."

The East Indian's loader was already questing about for the dead tiger. When he came back he announced, "It is my belief, *sahibs*, that the sambar is in this *khor*. Or, to speak truthfully, the does are here, so he cannot be far away. Observe that the does circle as they will around the hiding place of their fawns."

"Then it will be advisable to camp here until daybreak," the East Indian said, and added perfunctorily, "With your permission, sir."

"I'm not giving my permission," Murray retorted. "If there are no rules about hunting here in Bengal I'll make my own. I have the buck cornered and he belongs to me."

The missionary prevented an altercation. "He has the right of the first shot so let's get out of here."

"I merely suggest that the gentleman may need beaters," the East Indian said.

"I need nothing, not even my *shikari*," Murray said. "He ran away and I'm through with him. He can leave my pony but that's all. The rest of you better take Dr. Botts' suggestion and get out of here."

The East Indian shrugged. The Moslem blood in him was boiling but it was his Moslem half that said, "*Inshallah*—if it is God's will."

"It is God's will," said the missionary.

AT daybreak Murray awoke with the sudden light blazing in his eyes. He blinked and stared upward at the kites and vultures which had taken the place of the jackals. The buck still lay with his nose on the ground, his eyes wide open and glassy. If he was not dead he was dying, Murray thought, getting up and prowling to him from behind.

The buck heard him and heaved himself like a clumsy buffalo and stood spraddle-legged. A shot might end his misery, Murray thought, but not while the fellow was standing like that, fighting for his life. He had fought to save his does; he had saved the fawns, and indirectly, he had saved Murray himself! "When he dies I'll take his horns, not until then."

As he sat down to wait, the sambar's eyes rolled up and fixed on him like the eyes of those helpless fawns. Murray knew that he would not have to wait long. . .

They heard all about it at the Khan Sahib's

summer palace. News came over the bamboo telegraph that the Yank had been caught in the full fury of the monsoon. Instead of six hours it took him six days to get back. But when he did get back he had the horns.

At the hotel Murray found the missionary and the Englishman waiting for him. The latter was sprawled on a grasshopper chair, a whiskey peg in his hand, his shoulder in a cast, his face splotched in grog blossoms on a white background. The missionary ran down the verandah steps and helped Murray from his horse. Evidently they knew that he had just delivered the horns at the palace, for Dr. Botts asked, "What did the Khan Sahib say?"

"I left the horns at the gatekeeper's bungalow and didn't wait. Look at me." Murray's clothes were sopping, for the rains had poured on him day and night. Water and mud dripped from him as he went up to the verandah.

Unsley called to a houseboy, "Fix this chap a drink, a big one. He's a big *sahib*, a regular *burrah sahib*." He put out his good hand. "I told you about that tiger print just as a dare. Dashed if I thought you'd take me up on it!" Then he asked the same question, "What did his nibs say when you presented him with the horns?"

Murray explained. "Haven't heard from him yet."

"You will. He'll send a chit bearer before you can change your clothes, I'll wager. Or else, come to think of it, if it's an invitation, he'll send his Punjabi aide."

"If it's an invitation to an important guest," the missionary put in, "he might even send his minister of public works. He handles everything from the Khan's jute mills to his week-end parties."

"In any case you'll meet Nell Carson," Unsley said. "I saw her at the hospital while I was getting my shoulder patched up. She was there because of Red Cross work, you know. And is she delicious! She'd heard how you bagged the sambar a week ago. Some hillmen saw you standing over the dead buck that morning. And they saw you put some mangoes in front of his nose. Nell Carson was intrigued by the report. What were the mangoes for?"

"For the buck." Murray wiped his dripping face as if embarrassed. "Mango juice is the best medicine I know for a hangover, and that's the kind of thirst the old buck had."

"How did you get the horns?" Dr. Botts asked with a queer grin.

"The buck just handed 'em to me, and said, 'Thanks for keeping off the blow flies.'"

Neither the missionary nor Unsley laughed, for they sensed it was not a joke but something very close to the truth.

"The horns weren't in the velvet, were they?" Unsley asked.

"You've guessed it."

"The Chinese doctor," Unsley went on, "hoped they'd be in the velvet pulpy state, but according to the talk that's going around, they could not be because the buck fought off a tiger with them. They must have been sharp and clean and old."

"Another good guess," said Murray.

"I'm not guessing. I happen to know that sambar don't shed their horns after the rut like all other deer. Sometimes they don't shed them at all. They have the same tough horns for the next season, and the next—maybe for four years. But sooner or later—"

"I said you'd guessed it. It was throwing that five hundred pound tiger that must've given the horns a good wrench. The next morning I took a shot at a vulture and that scared the buck. He got up and crashed into a thicket and left his horns hanging right there in front of me."

Unsley nodded, smiling gradually. "You *couldn't* shoot him. I think Nell Carson will enjoy that! But as for the Khan, if he were a Hindu he might enjoy it too. But he's a Mohammedan. He better not know."

"Who's going to tell him?"

"Not I," said Unsley.

"Not I," said Dr. Botts. "And I don't think the Khan Sahib will ever know it's the same buck."

"The same buck as what?"

"I heard this morning from a hill village on my itinerary," Botts said, "a buck without horns was seen trudging alone in the forest. His back was marked with newly healed wounds. 'Like the marks on a squirrel which Krishna stroked,' the hillmen said."

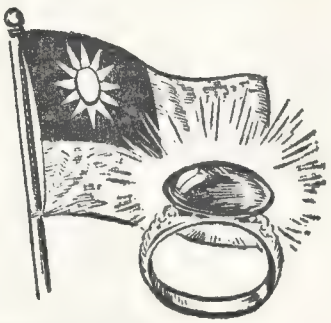
"Did they catch him?" Murray asked.

"No man can catch him in this weather, not until the monsoon's over months from now. Perhaps never, according to the hillmen, for they said the god has marked him as his own."

A closed car drove into the hotel compound. The houseboy ran down, talked to the liveried driver, came back.

"A visitor for you, *sahib*," he announced to Murray. "It is the minister of public works."

General Tsang had given the thief the appropriate punishment.



ILLUSTRATED BY MONROE EISENBERG

THE COLONEL AND "NUMBER ONE"

By DOUGLAS F. YOUNG

THE HEAT of the day was moderating gradually as night set in, but it was still oppressively warm. Colonel McIver and I were sitting on homemade chairs in front of his quarters in the little, nameless, Chinese village outside of Fu-ming. By straining my eyes in the gathering dusk I could make out the villagers' mud brick homes straggling down the rutted road. Some were thatched with straw and a few, representing the more affluent farmers, were roofed with tiles, but they were depressingly alike and, recalling myself, I stopped looking. One Chinese village is pretty much like the rest.

The colonel's house had a tile roof and the walls had crumbled less than those of most of the other buildings and on the inside they were furbished with whitewash in a style befitting his station in the current scheme of things in the Fu-ming region.

Jasper, or "Number One" as he was alternatively called, padded out to the table with a tray bearing four bottles. Neither of the two

names was rightfully his as he had been born Wang-the-third, but it had amused the colonel to give him an incongruous Western name. The "Number One" was a misnomer because he was so ineffectual that he exercised practically no control over the two other Chinese servants.

Jasper placed the bottles and two glasses on the table between us. Of the two large bottles, one was a bottle of twelve year old Scotch whisky; the other presumably was water. The two small ones I recognized as insect repellent bottles. I eyed the Scotch dubiously; it was nearly full. That was a compliment—there could be no question about it—as in the Kunming black market a sealed bottle like that would bring around forty to fifty dollars, gold, but I'm not even a one fisted drinker and I knew I was in fast company. Even had I never heard the legends of the colonel's prowess in felling squads of Chinese generals and legions of colonels who dared *"gan bei"* with him, the fine red veins of his broad face and the interesting shade of rose in the whites (so called) of his eyes would have warned me.

The colonel was holding his glass and Jasper was pouring a drink but evidently his aim was not too good as the colonel set his glass down on the table with an exclamation and rasped, "You nincompoop! Why don't you light the light so you can see what you are doing?"

"Dwei-bu-chi, Colonel," Jasper muttered. He broke four or five thin stemmed matches without getting a flame so I pulled out my cigarette lighter. In the light from that I could see that one of the insect repellent bottles served as the candle. I applied the lighter to the string wick and it took fire and burned smokily.

"Next time, Number One, pour the guest's drink first," the colonel said in Chinese.

"Ah, Colonel, you speak Chinese beautifully," I said facetiously, mimicking some of the interpreters I had met that day.

"Yes, I know that routine," he replied. "At times I haven't said more than *Hau bu-hau?* to some of the birds and they go into raptures over the perfection of my Mandarin dialect. They mean to make me feel good, I suppose, but it's a bit obvious. However—I'm sure some of my little ways are equally strange to them."

He passed me the other bottle of insect repellent.

"Let's put this 'repugnant' on. The mosquitoes get very fierce about this time and this is malaria country. When we get it on, we'll put out the light, as it attracts them."

AFTER I had tucked my trousers in my boots and buttoned my sleeves and collar I applied the oil, getting some of it into my eyes, as usual, and with the usual somewhat painful results.

The smoky flame flickered on the crude table and on the big, red-faced man in the rumpled suntans beyond it. It glanced off his features glistening with oil, the wayward nose, broken years ago when his horse had stumbled, the big ears, and pudgy cheeks. Highlights glanced from the bristling, sandy hair, receding at the temples, and from the tufts of reddish, Scotch-Irish hair sticking out of his ears. Altogether a formidable looking character, I thought, and well suited for his mission of representing our Army in this outpost of civilization.

The pungent odor of the repellent, the rustic scene revealed by the candle as it flared up intermittently, the mud house surrounded by big trees, the path leading to the road and thence to the river, across which sat the Japs—these things, together with the hoarse calls of the frogs from the nearby rice paddies, combined to evoke a sense of unreality. What am I doing here, anyway, I thought, miles away from everything I recognize and know about?

The mood, strong as it was, lasted only a second and then reality came rushing back and once again the Chinese village setting seemed familiar.

"What did you say you are down here for?" boomed the colonel, downing a good sized drink with no change of expression. "I didn't get the picture."

"Well, it isn't too clear. Major Boggs and I and the two non-coms are supposed to observe conditions in the field and to take back any ideas we get to improve our training. We are supposed to check with Chinese officers who have taken the course, as to its practical value. Frankly, I don't know why they sent us to this static sector. We can't expect to get very much here."

"No, I don't think you will. I guess it's just one of those situations where the order was issued some time ago and it seemed like a good idea at the time, but nobody followed it up to see if it accomplishes what was intended."

He turned and bellowed back into the dark doorway, "Jasper, what about those peanuts!" Turning back he said, "That guy has a memory like a sieve. Every day I have to start all over again with him and tell him what I want. By night-time he's forgotten it again."

"How long have you had him?"

"Let's see, it must be eleven—yes, a little over eleven months now."

I slapped at a mosquito, which was hovering near my face, evidently looking for an opening in the overcast of repellent to make a strafing attack.

"How come you haven't gotten rid of him yet? There are plenty of good Number One boys around and I'd always understood that you are rather . . . uh . . ." I groped for a euphemistic word to avoid the awkwardness involved in rephrasing the sentence.

"Shall we say 'exacting'?" said the colonel,

good humoredly helping me out. "Or maybe we should . . . " He paused as Jasper came softly to the table with the peanuts, his padded slippers making a whispering noise on the ground. His wrinkled face was impassive as usual, and only his hurried movements showed that he was conscious that he had slipped again and lost face in front of the visitor.

After Jasper had left, the colonel continued, "Or shall we just say 'a pain in the neck'?"

"Well," he said, musingly, "maybe I should give him the sack but I doubt that I shall. You see my ideas have been modified considerably in China. It's true that I used to set up a standard for my subordinates (and servants), and if they didn't meet it—bing! No explanations or excuses accepted—out they went. You know: 'There is no excuse for a military failure,' or 'What I require, Captain, is results, not explanations.' That sort of thing."

He paused again. The candle had flickered out and I could no longer see his face. All that I could distinguish were the vague outlines of his bulk and, beyond him, on the horizon, the dim silhouettes of the trees against the sky. The frogs' chorus from the paddies was swelling up to cathedral choir proportions. His cigarette lighter flared up and in the glow things jumped back into their proper places. I felt constrained to say something but couldn't think of anything that wouldn't sound feeble, so I took a drink. It was unnecessary anyway as he rumbled on.

"I may have had the right idea; I don't know. That's a trouble I have. When I change a principle that I've considered fixed and inviolable, I can never decide whether it represents weakness of character, or admirable flexibility in adapting myself to changed conditions.

"Anyway—when I came over here two years ago, that was my policy. I had always run a 'tight ship,' as it were, and I took pride in it. Naturally I had to be as strict with myself as I was with my men, but that wasn't hard for me.

"When I arrived in China I only hung around Forward Echelon Headquarters for a few days and then I got orders to join the Chinese New Sixth Army in Kweiching as a liaison officer. Theoretically we were supposed to aid and advise the commanding officer of the unit we were attached to but, actually, all we could do was keep our own headquarters informed of the location and general effectiveness of the Chinese units. That in itself was pretty important, however.

"We arrived down there after a kidney crushing trip in jeeps, and when we looked around it was a bit of a shock. They were so hampered by lack of equipment and lack of an opportunity to train, that they could just barely be counted as an effective unit. I liked old General Tsang though. He was shrewd and rough but he kept operating under conditions that would have broken an American officer's heart, and the main thing was that he never tried to kid me. Instead of telling me what he thought I would like to hear, or what would make him look good (regardless of how incredible it might be), he always gave me the straight dope. Maybe we had each other sized up—at least I hope that's what it was.

The general had a Number One boy, a cook, and a coolie assigned to me. In those days an American officer (regardless of whether his advice was welcomed) was treated like a minor oriental potentate. As long as he didn't interfere he was king.

"My Number One was named Liu so naturally I called him Louie. I took an instant dislike to him, but of course I tried not to show it until I had a chance to see how he would work out. He was tall for a Southwestern Chinese, and thin, and he had a tendency to feel sorry for himself that alienated me from the first. He was smart enough, and respectful, but I seemed to sense that he was an 'operator' and that to him I was just an opportunity.

"He first got me impatient by his habit of working on my clothing when I was around. Lord knows, I had little enough with me, but he would hold up one item and then another and say, 'Colonel very rich,' or 'Colonel many shirts'—the implication being that he was very poor in contrast and a little property transfer might tend to equalize things."

THE COLONEL shifted his big bulk and the home-made chair creaked alarmingly. The bottle clinked on the glass as he took another drink. I refused one. The moon was rising mistily but the increase in illumination did not dispel the mystery of the night. I took a pull at my drink to forestall the old sense of unreality.

"Of course, I gave him a few things—that was before we had any order against giving things away—and in that forsaken place in the hills no one would have cared anyway. But the thing that made me really blow my top was my discovery that Louie was getting a 'kickback' from cook and from Joe, the coolie, on what I paid them. They were getting paid by the Chinese Army but they got next to nothing so I used to give each of them about five dollars a month. Louie was taking away from the others half of whatever I gave them, as his perquisite as Number One boy.

"When I made that discovery I called Louie and started to 'eat him out' in Chinese but words failed me and so I got Mr. Nyi, my interpreter, and I began to chew up one side of Louie and down the other.

"It was rather funny, I guess. I would rant for a while, getting madder as I talked, and when I would stop for breath Mr. Nyi (who

was almost as scared as Louie) would hurriedly insert a few words in the pause, supposedly a translation of what I had just said. By that time I would have more breath and another idea and I'd interrupt him and continue. As a result he couldn't have delivered more than a few disconnected phrases of what I had said, but Louie got the idea all right."

I could picture that scene vividly—the big, red-faced American pounding the desk, the agitated interpreter, and the trembling Number One. I had no doubt that Louie had seen the light after his interview with the colonel.

"Didn't he have any defense?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. He was a poor man with a family to keep; it was accepted procedure for a Number One boy to 'squeeze' the lesser servants; it shouldn't make any difference to me what happened to my money after I had passed it out. You can imagine how receptive I was to those ideas. I smothered them in a blizzard of words.

"However, I didn't want to can Louie as I didn't like to bother General Tsang with my domestic problems, but I warned him he had to measure up to my standards from then on or he would be out—with no excuses accepted.

"The old boy became very attentive and business-like after that. When I would take a drink of water he would listen for the top to strike against the side of the canteen. If the noise indicated that the canteen was half full, or less, he would zip right in and get the canteen and fill it at once. He started conducting an all-out campaign against the rats which used to bother the life out of me at night after I had gone to bed. He never did get rid of them, though.

"Things went along all right for a while," he continued (as the Scotch in the bottle dwindled steadily), "until I started noticing a few things missing from my bedroom. It wasn't important at first—just some pencils and then some insignia—but it was annoying. I asked Louie about it, as he was the only one other than myself who had a key to the room, but he said he knew nothing about it.

"I didn't do anything until the morning my jade ring was gone. I had paid sixty dollars, gold, for it and fondly believed it would bring twice that in the States, so I was upset. I had left the ring on the dresser the night before and had forgotten about it until the middle of the next morning. I went back to get it just before leaving on a trip to Du-shi and there was no ring. I looked around without any real hope and then I started getting mad.

"I shouted for Louie but he wasn't around. He might have been in the village or he might have absconded for all I knew. Anyway, my mind was decided. Louie was the only one who had had access to the room, besides myself, and if he hadn't taken it he was at least responsible for its loss. I sat down and scribbled off a note to General Tsang, describing what had happened and asking him to have Louie removed from my establishment at once. Then I bellowed for Mr. Nyi who was waiting outside to leave for Du-shi with us. He came into the room wearing such a serious expression that even his eyeglasses seemed to gleam with concern.

" 'Is something amiss, Colonel McIver?' he asked. He often came up with a phrase that had a literary flavor. His calm bearing soothed me a bit and I lowered my voice to a moderate bellow.

" 'There certainly is. I want you to read this note and tell me if it's clear to you. If it is, take it over to General Tsang's headquarters and translate it to him personally. We'll go ahead without you.'

"He read the note carefully and then looked up, his glasses winking like blinker signals. 'This is very serious for the Number One boy, Colonel,' he said.

" 'Precisely, Mr. Nyi, that's just what I intend.'

"His face was impassive as he took the note and left. I resumed my interrupted business of leaving for Du-shi to meet Larry Crown, who was on a trip from Kunming. When I thought of the incident during the remainder of the day it was only with irritation directed at Louie.

"That night I dragged myself into the bedroom about eleven-thirty, battered by the three hour jeep ride. The bed covers had not been turned back and the mosquito bar had not been lowered and tucked in. As I was washing my face, Joe, the coolie, came in the room and stood watching me. I greeted him and asked, 'Number One gone now?'

" 'Aye-uh. Gone.'

" 'No come back again?'

" 'No come back. Number One dead.'

" 'What!' I exclaimed, straightening up so suddenly I bumped my head on the shelf over the washstand. 'What do you mean, "dead"?'

" 'Soldier shoot him at wall,' said Joe, pantomiming a soldier shooting a rifle.

"It could only mean one thing—that Louie had been shot by a firing squad. I snatched up my garrison cap with an excited notion of going over to General Tsang's headquarters and finding out what had happened, then I recovered my judgment, remembering that it was late and everyone would be in bed. There was nothing that could be done about it until the next day.

"That didn't help my frame of mind during the remaining hours of the night, however. I told myself that Louie had brought on his own fate but still—he had been alive and talking to me that morning and now he was dead and I had set in motion the process which had caused it. It was a nearly sleepless night for me."

THE COLONEL paused to refresh himself with the remaining Scotch and I made an indistinguishable noise to indicate that I was listening sympathetically.

"I've seen plenty of dead men since then but the sight of a dead stranger doesn't affect me nearly so strongly as the loss of someone with whom I've been in daily contact, especially if I've had something to do with it."

"But, Colonel," I interrupted, "you may have been a little quick in turning him in, but you couldn't help what happened after that."

"Yes, I know. But wait 'til I finish.

"The next morning Mr. Nyi and I were waiting for Tsang when he arrived at his headquarters. Before I could say anything he told Nyi that his assistant adjutant had already assigned me a new Number One boy. I told Nyi to ask the general why Louie had been shot. The old boy sat there behind his desk, his cropped hair bristling and his sharp eyes peering at me, and said (as Mr. Nyi translated it), 'You reported him to be a thief and that was the appropriate punishment.'

" 'But, General Tsang,' I expostulated, 'I didn't expect any action like that when I reported him. There was only a piece of jewelry involved and the worst I anticipated was that you would put him at hard labor, or something like that.'

" 'Colonel McIver, you are a guest of this army,' the old war horse said very rapidly in Chinese, with Nyi translating. 'We do not look lightly upon thievery of our guests' property. Secondly, you are a representative of our strongest ally. Even if I did not want to take action myself, I should be very uncomfortable if word of any mishap to you should get back to Chungking. Hence I must take the strongest methods to prevent a recurrence. Finally, Colonel, conditions here are much different from those you have been familiar with and different methods must prevail. I can assure you from my experience that the punishment given was necessary under the circumstances.'

"There was nothing I could say after that, so we exchanged salutes and I left with the unsatisfactory feeling that I had appeared naive to the general in this situation.

"Returning to my quarters, I went into the bedroom, where all this had started. I was standing in front of the dresser, staring at my reflection in the hand mirror tacked on the wall there, and musing that I had better get to work and get the affair off my mind, when my eye was attracted by a piece of colored string trailing from behind the big packing case that had been converted into a wardrobe. The previous night I had left that string on the table after opening a package. I walked over and pulled it out from behind the wardrobe, wondering how it had gotten there. I managed to get my hand into the darkness behind the wardrobe and feel around to see if there was anything else there.

"I touched a couple of pencils and pushed them out in the open. Then, curiosity aroused, I explored some more. My fingers touched some metal—there was no mistake—it was the insignia which had disappeared previously.

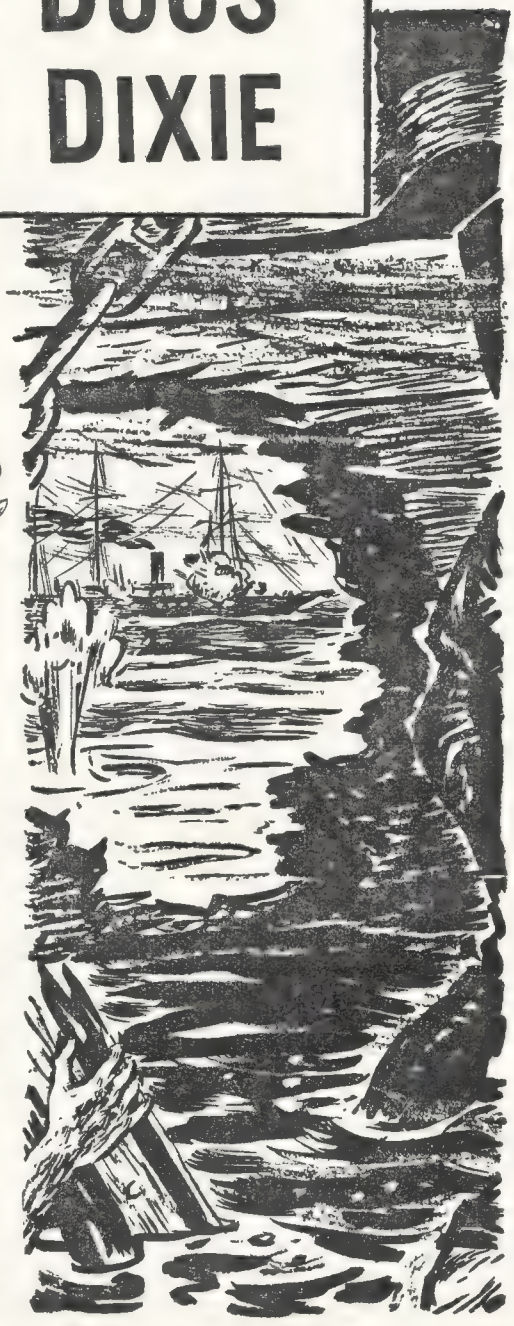
"Then I began to sweat. There was a sudden roaring in my ears and my mouth went dry, as I told myself that what I was thinking couldn't be true. I had to know, so I plunged my hand into the recess again and explored it feverishly. My fingers touched metal and closed on a man's ring and I drew forth the missing jade ring which had caused Louie's death. Only then did I realize that the articles had been stolen by a pack rat and secreted in the room. Then I got a little sick in my stomach."

The colonel threw the remains of a cigar into the underbrush. I noted that the moon was high now and it would be the best time to stumble down the path to my billet. A cool breeze had sprung up and blown the insects away. I shivered a little.

"This Jasper is Louie's cousin. He's not worth a damn and he'll never measure up to any conceivable standard, but I haven't fired him and I don't suppose I ever shall."

FIGHTING DOCS OF DIXIE

A Fact Story



THE *Alabama's* crew of 149 officers and men was well rested and well fed. Captain Semmes had consulted his competent ship's surgeon the day before the renowned Confederate cruiser steamed out of Cherbourg harbor to give battle to the United States steamer *Kearsage*. On the advice of Dr. Galt, the skipper had ordered the men to their hammocks early. "Give them a good night's sleep and a hearty breakfast," the surgeon had said, "and I'll warrant they will work the guns with a steadier hand and a clearer head."

If the powder and shell aboard the *Alabama* had been as fit as the men, there might have been another and very different chapter in naval warfare than the one which was written on that bright Sunday of June 19, 1864. As it turned out, however, it was well that the surgeon had prepared the seamen for the gruelling and tragic day ahead.

The crew did not turn to until 9 A. M. when the skipper summoned all hands aft, where he mounted a gun carriage to address them. Raphael Semmes was a man of action, but he had not spoken to his men formally since the day on which he had received them into the Confederate service. Although they had scoured the seven seas and cleaned it of Yankee commerce, they had yet to meet an adversary as

ILLUSTRATED BY
WILLIAM P. TIMMINS

By H. G. RUSSELL

Water was rushing into the cabin through great holes torn in the ship, as Dr. Llewelyn made a last-minute effort to complete an amputation.

powerful as the one before them. Semmes knew that his words would imbue the crew with the confidence needed in battle. He finished his brief but impassioned address with fighting words. "The flag that floats over you is that of a young Republic, which bids defiance to her enemies, whenever and wherever found. Show the world that you know how to uphold it! Go to your quarters!"

If he had had any doubts about the morale aboard ship before he spoke to the crew, the captain must have dispelled them when he noted how every man was dressed with extra care that morning. The officers were actually resplendent in their London-tailored uniforms of steel gray. They wore the double-breasted frock coat with gilt buttons, the naval cap of the time, and they carried swords on going into battle.

While Captain Semmes was speaking, his eyes rested on two men in particular—his first lieutenant, John M. Kell, and his ship's surgeon, Francis L. Galt. Both men had been close to him during all his long and perilous cruises. He knew that he could count on Kell to keep the men working and on Galt to keep them fit to work.

Assistant Surgeon David H. Llewellyn accompanied Dr. Galt below. Both officers removed their coats and made ready for the grim task before them. While Francis L. Galt was bred to the old Navy, having served most of his six-year period with the United States fleet before entering the Confederate naval service, Dr. Llewellyn was a young Englishman from Wiltshire. He had come out with the *Alabama* from the shipyards in the capacity of physician to the merchant crew, prior to the commissioning of the raider at the Isle of Terceira. But he must have had a gentleman's agreement about his future with a member of the Confederate naval intelligence; for when the skipper converted the racy "290" into a black-hulled man-o'-war, Dr. Llewellyn was right there in the full uniform of an assistant surgeon of the Confederate Navy. He wore the single olive sprig on a field of black to designate the medical corps and to distinguish him in rank from the ship's surgeon, whose shoulder straps bore crossed olive sprigs.

WHILE Assistant Surgeon Llewellyn was inspecting the instruments, the *Alabama* was steaming out to sea to sight the *Kearsage,* now lying offshore about seven miles. Dr. Llewellyn must have been anticipating the exciting events to follow, while Surgeon Galt had almost an hour to review his career on the high seas as he busied himself with preparations for operating. He had been at sea with Captain Semmes for two and a half years since he sailed out of New Orleans as surgeon of the Confederate steamer *Sumter* on June 29, 1861. He had been to the West Indies, Gibraltar, England, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, the Malay Peninsula, and Malabar. Including prisoners taken, he had ministered to the physical needs of 2500 seamen. He had run up an enviable record; for in spite of changes in wind and weather, a scarcity of varied foods, and a demand for a heavy medicine chest to heal the ills of every outlandish climate, this fighting physician of the Confederacy had failed to lose one man by disease.

The methodical Semmes knew how much he could rely on Surgeon Galt and he never failed to consult him on any matter that pertained to the health and well-being of his crew. Semmes proudly said, "I had skillful and attentive surgeons. I gave them *carte blanche* with regard to medicines and diet." In spite of small and crowded quarters, Dr. Galt and his assistant carefully guarded the health of the men, prescribing changes of clothing with each significant change of latitude and daily changes in warm climates; guarding against drunkenness, yet issuing regular rations of grog; and finally, raising the morale of all on board by promoting and refereeing sports.

A rumbling noise overhead broke up the doctor's reverie and warned the surgeon that the battle was about to begin. "Semmes has shifted one of his thirty-two-pounders to starboard," Galt said. "That ought to help offset the superiority of the eleven-inch guns aboard the *Kearsage.*"

The Confederate captain had done just that. When the two ships were about a mile apart, Semmes sheared to port and opened up with his starboard battery. Captain Winslow also brought his starboard guns to bear and the engagement became general. Unfortunately, during his long cruise, Semmes had been forced to conserve his ammunition so that he had been unable to give his crew much practice at the guns and he was conscious of their inferior gunnery. To offset this advantage, he tried to maneuver the *Alabama* more closely to the *Kearsage.* Mistaking this movement for a retreat to the shore, the Federal skipper tried to cut him off. The result was a circular movement and a closing of the distance from a mile to a half mile between the ships.

By this time shot and shell were smashing into the *Alabama* near the water-line. Her spanker gaff was shot away and the ensign fell to the deck. It was immediately run up at the mizzen-masthead. But the damage to the Confederate cruiser had been great. Men were being killed and disabled in all parts of the ship by the raking fire. Before the bodies of the dead could be moved, they were ripped to pieces by the two 11-inch Dahlgrens aboard the *Kearsage.*

Surgeons Galt and Llewellyn were working

frantically on the maimed and wounded below. As the shot and shell pounded the *Alabama* and crashed through her timbers, the work of the surgeons became more futile with each moment. Water was rushing into the cabin through great holes torn in the ship. First Lieutenant Kell came below to see how great the damage was. "She will never stay afloat more than ten minutes," he told the medical officers.

When he went on deck and reported the extent of the damage to Captain Semmes, the skipper said, "Then, sir, cease firing, shorten sail, and haul down the colors. It will never do in this nineteenth century for us to go down, our decks covered with our gallant wounded." The captain then sent for Surgeon Galt. "Galt," he ordered, "accompany the wounded to the *Kearsage*. There is but one boat that is serviceable." The executive officer had the boat lowered and Dr. Galt shoved off for the U. S. warship under a rain of deadly missiles, for the Federal skipper thought this a ruse and had not yet ordered his gunners to cease firing.

Meanwhile, Dr. Llewellyn was below, working in a welter of blood and water in a last-minute effort to complete an amputation. As Lieutenant Kell descended to order the physician to the deck, the sight of death and agony was sufficient to make even his stout heart flinch. The surgeon, calm and steady of hand, stood over the patient with instrument poised for the operation when an 11-inch shell crashed through the stout timbers of the cruiser and both patient and table were swept from under the surgeon's knife. Dr. Llewellyn staggered back, miraculously unhurt and fell in the water that was rushing through the aperture. Lieutenant Kell helped him to his feet. "You better get on deck, Doctor," he said. "I'll give you a hand with this man." The wounded seaman, patiently waiting for the surgeon to relieve his pain, felt the approach of death. He clutched at the lieutenant's hand and kissed it as a token of his trust. Before the officers could move him, he was dead.

Reaching the deck, Kell bellowed the order, "Every man for himself. Grab an oar or a spar and jump clear of the ship before she sucks you in." Kell and the doctor undressed, several of the men helping them pull off their clothes. Semmes kept on his trousers and vest, then he and the first lieutenant dedicated their swords to the sea and the ship and tossed them into the waves. They and the rest of the survivors jumped and swam clear of the ship. The black hull of the cruiser trembled. As her stern settled, her prow shot up in the air, and she plunged into the sea.

Soon the icy waters contained all that was left of the crew of the once-famous *Alabama* except the wounded who had gone in the one boat with Dr. Galt. Ten men drowned while struggling in the water in hope of rescue. The captain and the first officer were battling for their lives, fighting sheer exhaustion. They had lost Dr. Llewellyn in the excitement. Then Lieutenant Kell sighted a float, which he hoped he might reach. One of the sailors who still retained his strength swam to examine it. "It's the doctor, sir," he called out. "He's dead."

Lieutenant Kell, more dead than alive, was pulled into a boat from the English yacht *Deerhound*, where he was happy to discover his beloved commander lying in the stern sheets. Soon both were aboard the yacht, which set sail for Southampton, where Captain Semmes had the sad task of informing Dr. Llewellyn's family of his heroic death.

Meanwhile, the wounded aboard the *Kearsage* were cared for by Dr. Galt, who remained with them as a prisoner of war. Although the *Kearsage* failed to send out boats to pick up the survivors, the Confederate naval surgeon said that the prisoners and wounded were treated well and that the medical attention was all that could be desired.

SURGEON GALT was but one of thirty-two medical officers in the United States Navy who resigned their commissions in the parent service when the war clouds gathered on the horizon. From ship and hospital these loyal doctors of Dixie made their way to the South where they immediately tendered their services to the Confederate Government. Secretary Mallory readily accepted their offer and they were commissioned in the same rank that they had held in the United States Navy. Many of these physicians had long years of honorable service afloat and ashore. More than a few were veteran sawbones of the old Navy with sturdy sealegs and salt in their veins, who were more at home on the dripping deck of a lurching ship than when walking the white-washed wards of a landlubber's hospital. To these old seadogs the stench of bilge was steadying compared to the sweet-smelling odor of the newfangled chloroform. Surgeon James Cornick of Virginia, the senior member of the Confederate corps, had entered the United States naval service in 1819, when *Old Ironsides* had been a comparatively new ship. The junior member, Passed Assistant Surgeon Iglehart of Maryland, had been at sea with the United States fleet but one month. But young and old, they doffed the blue and donned the gray; while with sword and scalpel, they hastened to fill the posts to which they were assigned in Dixie's new Navy.

On paper the organization was completed long before the veteran physicians could reach the Mason-Dixon line. They arrived in the Office of Medicine and Surgery in many instances before the ships to which they were

ordered were fully commissioned. But there was need for naval doctors to examine recruits and candidates for commissions. The surgeon in charge of the bureau, which operated directly under the Secretary of the Navy, put them to work while they were awaiting more definite orders. Surgeon Spottswood, an old-timer from the Federal service, was beached for the duration at the bureau, where he functioned as a medical chief of staff for Secretary Mallory. Throughout the war, he issued orders and received reports from the fleet surgeons, the fighting physicians of lone raiders on the high seas, the doctors assigned to naval hospitals, yards, and recruiting depots. He and his clerk handled the requisitions for medicines, instruments, and stores; the accounts of receipts and expenditures; the case histories of the sick sent ashore to hospitals; and the abstracts from the journals of daily practice kept at all stations.

The older physicians did not have long to wait, for they were generally assigned to shore stations of which there were about seventeen throughout the Confederacy. The younger doctors were ordered to sea aboard the cruisers, the rams, and the gunboats as rapidly as the ships were commissioned. Sea duty in the South was a conception of considerable magnitude. It ranged from service with the river flotillas on the inland waters of the Confederacy to sailing the seven seas with skippers like Semmes and Maffitt. Sea pay was higher than shore pay and there was another variable in the tables based on longevity. But since the higher ranking surgeons with long years in the service were usually beached, rank for rank, the pay checks were quite evenly distributed.

During the greater part of the war, the Medical Corps of the Confederate Navy was divided into surgeons afloat and surgeons ashore on a fifty-fifty basis. The naval hospitals at Richmond, Wilmington, Savannah and Mobile had the full-time services of from one to five surgeons. The naval stations at Richmond, Wilmington, Charlotte, Charleston, Savannah and Saint Marks were similarly staffed. The other shore stations each carried one naval doctor. These assignments were greatly varied, ranging from the naval ordnance works at Selma, Alabama, to the receiving ship *Indian Chief* and the schoolship *Patrick Henry*. They could hardly be called inactive assignments and only shore duty in a very technical sense. This was particularly true of the *Patrick Henry*, which was frequently under fire while functioning as a naval academy. Nearby the cadetship was the Naval Battalion at Drewery's Bluff and a battalion of Confederate marines. Both these outfits, actively engaged in the defense of the Confederate capital, were served by a fighting physician of the Navy. There were seven naval doctors of Dixie on special service, attached to naval intelligence or waiting assignments to ships under construction in Europe.

All the posts for fleet surgeons and surgeons were filled from the former U S. Navy physicians, but Secretary Mallory commissioned forty-one civilian doctors in the ranks of assistant surgeon and assistant surgeon for the war. Most of these medical men were young and active; they were, accordingly, assigned to sea duty. There were youngsters in medical school during the first years of the war who were commissioned in 1864. Thus new and fighting blood was infused into the Medical Corps of the Confederate Navy to keep alive the tradition the veterans had established. Even the older doctors in the hospitals were not far from the battle-line; while those at sea were participants in stirring and dangerous ventures.

Consider the career of Passed Assistant Surgeon Freeman of the armored ram *Atlanta* who ministered to the wounded on that fateful June day in 1863 when that unlucky ship went aground off Savannah, where she was pounded by the fifteen-inch guns of the Federal monitor *Weehawken* at a murderous distance of three hundred yards. Stuck fast in the sand, the *Atlanta's* engines were powerless to move her and her guns could not be brought to bear on the approaching Federal craft. Although the Confederate ram fired eight shots, not one of them struck the *Weehawken;* while the first shot from the Federal smashed through the *Atlanta's* casement, wounding sixteen of her crew with splinters of flying timber and metal and knocking forty more seamen senseless from the impact.

If Dr. Freeman had possessed six arms and legs, they would still have been insufficient to enable him to provide for all the needs of the casualties suddenly thrust upon him. Then the second shot hit the roof of the pilot-house, wounding the two pilots and the helmsman. It was quickly followed by a third that so increased the carnage that Commander Webb was forced to surrender to stop the useless slaughter. Surgeon Freeman worked like a beaver with the aid of his medical stewards and the few who were able to assist. There was no other doctor aboard. The Federals made prisoners of the crew of 165, but they permitted the surgeon to return to the shore with the wounded.

Dr. Freeman later became ship's surgeon of the *Palmetto State* and participated in many daring exploits against the blockading fleet when his ship was attached to the Charleston squadron. As the victorious armies of the North approached the South Carolina port, the Confederates, without land support and blockaded by sea, burned the yard and the ships stationed there. Dr. Freeman accompanied the garrison and the crews to Virginia, where they fought in Lee's last battle at Saylor's Creek.

ANOTHER thrilling episode in the annals of the Confederate Navy in which a fighting physician shared the dangers and privations of the sailors whom he also healed is the story of Assistant Surgeon Marcellus Ford of the wooden gunboat *Chattahoochee*. The *Chattahoochee* was a light-draft river steamer, carrying six guns, four in broadside battery and one forward and one aft. Her mission was to protect the Chattahoochee, Flint, and Appalachicola Rivers from naval raiders sent out by the blockading squadron and to scout the outlets for the Florida planters who were risking the blockade.

In an attempt to capture one of the blockaders by boarding under cover of darkness, the small boats of the *Chattahoochee* became separated during a storm that came up suddenly. The storm turned into a gale. It became impossible to reach the shore, and the boat headed for the open sea. Seventeen sailors were crowded into the open boat and ten more from one of the capsized dories were clinging to the sides. The boat was half filled with water, but provisions and medical supplies were jettisoned and the exhausted seamen were pulled aboard. Expecting to be washed overboard any minute, the party sighted St. George Island where the breakers cast the boat upon the beach. Stranded without food, they staved off starvation by eating shellfish and alligators until rescued by a searching party.

It would not be possible to write of all the heroic adventures that befell the fighting physicians of the Confederate Navy as the Southern seamen waged a gallant but losing fight. One more incident, however, bears telling because it was typical of the methods of ingenuity the Confederates were forced to employ, and it illustrates the prominent part which the medical officers and stewards of Dixie's Navy played in all such encounters. The capture of the United States gunboat *Water Witch* off Savannah on June 3, 1864, was such an engagement.

Aided by the darkness of the night and the sound of the driving rain, the Confederates approached the Federal side-wheeler with its crew of eighty from both port and starboard beams. It was a little later than midnight as the gray-clad sailors rowed with muffled oars toward the U. S. warship. Four open boats headed for the port side of the *Water Witch;* three for the starboard. The last boat in each column carried a fighting physician and two surgeon's stewards. Assistant Surgeon Jones of the *Savannah* was in boat No. 7 of the port column, led by Lieutenant Pelot. Assistant Surgeon Thomas of the *Georgia* was in boat No. 6 of the starboard column, commanded by Lieutenant Price.

When the boats were close to the Federal craft, the watch aboard hailed the approaching columns. Lieutenant Pelot defiantly answered, "Rebels!" and ordered his men to board. The watch gave the alarm. The engines were immediately reversed so that the side-wheeler thrashed the water violently, churning it so that it became almost impossible for the boats on the port beam to come close enough for boarding. Lieutenant Pelot was the first over the side. A flash of lightning revealed his Confederate gray to the Federal paymaster who shot him dead. On the starboard side the firing was sharper and many of the Confederate sailors were mowed down in the open boats. Lieutenant Price, now in command, succeeded in gaining the deck, followed by a burly seaman who cut down more than one antagonist on the point of running the lieutenant through. Dr. Thomas was right behind with sword flashing and pistol blazing. A shot aimed at him hit Surgeon's Steward Harley and he slumped on the deck. Lieutenant Price was slashed across the head with a cutlass but he kept on fighting until Surgeon Thomas bandaged his wound after the encounter ceased. There was no chance to identify the medical men by their insignia. In the blackness of the night one was either friend or foe as individual duels were fought on the bloody deck and pistols blazed at each revealing flash from the heavens.

In ten minutes the *Water Witch* was in the hands of the Confederates, being piloted to a safe anchorage under the protection of a Rebel battery. Surgeons Thomas and Jones with swords sheathed were now below, working with the Federal surgeon, Dr. Pierson, to stop the flow of blood and relieve the suffering of the wounded. Both sides had suffered heavily. The losses in wounded were about even, but the Southerners had several more killed. The mission in which the surgeons had played no insignificant part had been accomplished, and the *Water Witch* was added to the ships of the Confederate Navy. The wounded were removed to the Savannah Naval Hospital, where the Federal prisoners were placed under the care of their own physician, Dr. Pierson.

In all these incidents the Confederate naval doctors shared the perils of the line officers and seamen and acquitted themselves nobly in battle as well as in the humane work to which they had dedicated their lives. There is, however, one instance where the process was reversed when one of the saltiest skippers of the Southern Navy turned physician himself to battle an epidemic of yellow fever, fought it successfully, then succumbed to the plague. Though weak, he recovered sufficiently to run the blockade into Mobile Bay, while his ship was raked by the guns of the Federals trying to stop him. Such were the harrowing experiences of Commander John N. Maffitt, commanding the Confederate cruiser *Florida*.

In a letter to Captain Bullock of the Con-

federate naval intelligence, Maffitt wrote, "No doctor, no paymaster. I now have three cases of yellow fever; have had seven. Am doing well in that line. *You remember my fondness for doctoring the crew.*" But while at Cardenas, the Confederate skipper was himself stricken. With his resistance at a low ebb from continual strain, he was an easy victim for the virulent germ, and the attack was nearly fatal. But thanks to the timely aid of a surgeon of the Spanish Navy, he recovered sufficiently to pilot his ship into dock at Mobile, sitting on the quarter-rail while the pursuing Federal warships shot away his fore-topmast, foregaff, and main rigging. An eleven-inch shell penetrated Captain Maffit's cabin but failed to explode; another punctured the hull from starboard to port but fortunately it struck above the waterline. After extensive repairs had been made, the dauntless Maffitt once more ran the blockade and the *Florida* began her career at sea as a commerce-destroyer. This time she carried a ship's doctor, Passed Assistant Surgeon Garrettson of Virginia, formerly of the United States Navy.

THE lack of a ship's surgeon on the *Florida* was due to her being commissioned in a foreign port with only a skeleton crew available and not to any dearth of physicians in the Confederacy. As a matter of fact, Dixie was well supplied with doctors. Not only did the Confederate Navy take over a goodly number of seasoned surgeons from the United States Navy, but due to the tradition of culture and the prestige value of a profession among the well-to-do slaveholders in the South, the Confederacy had an ample number of young men trained to medicine. Shortly before the war, more than half the medical students in Philadelphia were Southerners who had had previous classical training.

The Confederate Navy seemed willing to recognize the importance and prestige of her medical officers by paying them slightly more than that which a line officer of equivalent rank received. Unlike the custom which prevailed in the United States Navy then, and still does today, the naval doctors of Dixie were not captains, commanders, and lieutenants. Instead they held the equivalent ranks of fleet surgeon, surgeon, passed assistant surgeon, and assistant surgeon. Except for a difference in color and insignia on their shoulder straps, they wore the same uniform as the naval officer of the line—steel gray with stripes of gold on the sleeve.

Their duties aboard ship, in naval stations and hospitals were identical with those of the officers in the medical corps of the Federal Navy. Many of the surgeons in the Confederate Navy had served afloat and ashore with physicians and line officers of the old Navy. The regulations of the medical departments of both Navies were in all essential details quite similar. The strictness of the United States Navy was carried over to the Confederate Navy and imposed upon the civilian physicians who entered without any prior naval service. Proper dress was insisted upon more than once, and there was no absence of administrative paper work where such reports served to promote efficiency.

But as the fortunes of war waned for the Confederacy, the blockade also tightened, and the most necessary medical supplies became scarce. While the Northern medical service constantly improved due to unlimited supplies and equipment, and their hospital ships followed the fleet, the fighting physicians of the Confederacy were driven to the utmost extremes of expediency to stem the flow of blood and fight the fevers of the undernourished and overworked seamen. These battles which they waged against hunger, disease and pestilence may have lacked the glamor of the clashes between naval combatants, but they called for a degree of courage which, if anything, was rarer than that needed in facing a tangible foe.

There is a story of a volunteer of the river fleet, swimming the Mississippi to search for badly needed supplies of quinine, calomel and opium to aid the defenders of Vicksburg. He canvassed the Rebel doctors in the outlying communities, collected the supplies, then, finding an old dugout, loaded it with the drugs and swam under the guns of the Federal ships, pushing the apparent derelict before him. There were many instances where Southern belles made trips to Washington, Philadelphia, and other cities to buy quinine and morphine. Relying on chivalrous treatment if caught, they lined their petticoats with small parcels of the drugs.

Later on in the war when supplies on hand gave out, when captured supplies were too infrequently obtained and the blockade had all but shut out any hope of relief from Europe, the medical departments of both the Confederate Army and Navy relied on the indigenous drugs plucked from field and forest. With the aid of Surgeon Porcher's manual, specially written for the purpose, the naval doctors of Dixie mastered a new *materia medica* to heal the wounded.

Not only were medicines scarce, but the very instruments needed to remove musket balls, shell fragments, and to perform amputations, were not to be had. Here is a typical case from the lips of the operating surgeon: "With the assistance of a very stupid and sleepy nurse —one of the convalescents—I had to amputate the hand, attacked with gangrene. The instruments were not available and I did the operation with the contents of a small pocket case and a saw that belonged to the carpenter. While

my assistant held the lamp, I administered the chloroform, had one eye on the patient's respiration, while with the other eye, I directed as best I could the cutting process and the ligating of the arteries. The boy recovered."

Chloroform was the usual anesthetic used in major operations, but it was not always available. Many an emergency operation had to be performed under conditions that would be considered inhumane and practically impossible today. While the more progressive surgeons in the Confederate Navy believed in the use of a general anesthetic, there were still a good many of the old school in the service who had performed an amputation by splitting a gallon of rum with the unfortunate seaman, using the liquor for the two-fold job of steadying their hand and rendering the patient unconscious. Only the reformers came out boldly for the use of choloroform.

For instance, Dr. J. Julien Chisolm, who wrote the first and only manual of military surgery that either the Army or Navy doctors could lay hands on during the first two years of the war, tells about a Dr. Hall of the English Medical Service, who "disparages chloroform and lauds the lusty bawling of the wounded from the smart of the surgeon's knife as a powerful stimulant which has roused many a sinking man from his apathetic state." The Confederate surgeon continues, "Some of the older surgeons characterize the cries of the patients as music to the ear, and speak of it as an advantage to be courted, and not suppressed." But the more modern and humane Surgeon Chisolm is not for this lusty butchering, for he concludes, "*Notwithstanding such advice,* we do not hesitate to say that chloroform should be given to every patient requiring a serious or painful operation."

IN SPITE of the efforts of the valiant surgeons, the state of medicine and surgery at the time of the Civil War was a regrettable one, for the discoveries of Lister and Pasteur were yet to reach the world. Innumerable fatalities resulted from wounds which, at a later date, would have responded to routine treatment. One of the Confederate surgeons, writing a little later, says that hospital gangrene and erysipelas were great scourges, and that gunshot wounds of any joint were nearly always fatal. He further states that many amputations were made with nothing more than a pocket knife and a common saw. Unaware of the existence of the germ theory, the doctors were searching for causes for the high fatalities connected with nature. Surgeon Chisolm thought that tetanus was caused by atmospheric changes connected with dampness.

Often the more progressive and alert surgeons had to battle the prejudices of the suffering patients as well as those of their older colleagues. For instance, there was a popular dread of night air that the younger physicians tried to break down. One Rebel surgeon permitted his hospital patients to smoke in bed provided they would open the windows. Another encouraged fumigations, saying, "Fumigations are of essential importance. They make such an abominable smell that they compel you to open the windows."

In general the naval hospitals of the Confederacy were small establishments compared to the larger military hospitals built to accommodate thousands, the largest of which was the Chimboroso Hospital in Richmond which handled a total of 76,000 cases during the war. The Richmond Naval Hospital, staffed by five surgeons, was no such extensive proposition. At best it could not provide beds for more than 200 patients at a time. The naval hospitals in Wilmington, Savannah and Mobile were considerably smaller, usually carrying but one officer of the Navy medical corps with irregular local professional assistance. There were also station hospitals at the navy yards. The one at Mobile in 1864 was larger than the naval hospital outside the yard due to the naval activities there at the time. The fighting surgeons were shifted as the exigencies of war called for their services in different theaters of war, and the size of the naval hospitals varied in response to a shift in naval operations.

In a report to his superior, Dr. Pierson of the captured Federal gunboat *Water Witch* gives a vivid word picture of one of the small Confederate naval hospitals, and tells of the kindness and courtesy of the Confederate surgeons there. "My patients," he wrote, "were placed under my care at a hospital called the Savannah Naval Hospital, under charge of Surgeon Jeffery, C.S.N. This hospital was devoid of some of the luxuries found in Northern hospitals, but was airy and comfortable, and the patients there received every care and comfort which the somewhat limited resources of the country permitted. I myself was treated with gentlemanly consideration by Dr. Jeffery and the assistant surgeons, as well as by the numerous Rebel officers who frequently called there. While at Savannah I tabled with the Rebel surgeons in the hospital, and during my stay there—nearly six weeks—we had coffee never, tea only five or six times, butter about as often. To the credit of the surgeons be it said that while they denied themselves the luxury of tea at $30 to $40 per pound, they had it furnished to our wounded and generally fed them better than they fed themselves."

But not many months thereafter, Sherman was marching through Georgia and laying waste the countryside. The naval station at Savannah had held out against the Federal

(Continued on page 146)

"Of course, there's the formality of your signature, Mr. Pickle," said Oakes.

HILL SMART

By TED STRATTON

BEHIND the isolated Ramapo Rampart, the sun glared bright on the curling hill road. The sky beyond the soft curve of the horizon woods was the color of a winging-away bluebird. Overlooking the dusty road, a man sprawled on a broken barrel chair propped against a maple that leaned over a weathered shack.

His bare feet dangled a country mile from the cuffs of a pair of patched overalls secured precariously on one shoulder by a single, tired gallus. An alarmed gray squirrel scampered up a roadside chestnut and crouched in a

ILLUSTRATED BY JOE FARREN

crotch. A yellowthroat in a thorn tangle chopped off a note in midair.

Spider Pickle opened his eyes at the interruption. He spat a fat arc of tobacco juice at a hunched toad, and missed. The toad blinked solemnly, but did not stir.

A young girl trudged under the chestnut and the squatting squirrel shot off its mouth. A calico dress clung to her bones. Dust coated high black shoes. Sweat plastered down her carrot-colored hair. She plopped on the hard clay under the shade. "You a-resting, Pop?" she asked tiredly.

Spider roused himself. "Friday—what you doing home from the cannery?"

"You can see for yourself."

"Fetch your pay?"

"Some."

"Hope you ain't spent any on folderols in town."

"Some went to the doctor, Pop."

Spider noticed the bandage on the girl's right hand. Blood had seeped through the cloth and dried. "What's that you're a-wearing, Liz?" he wanted to know.

"A rag."

"What's it for?"

"I got hurt to the cannery yesterday."

"Hurt yourself mean?"

"Mean enough." A tear ploughed a crooked furrow down her dusty cheek. "Caught my hand in the danged machine," she whimpered.

"You could walk home, couldn't you?"

"I—I lost two fingers, Pop!"

Spider studied his hands uneasily. "Now that's too bad." Slowly he counted off his fingers. "Let's see, Liz—ain't you got eight left?"

"But they were on my pencil-holding hand, Pop!"

"Shucks," Spider drawled kindly, "all a body needs in the hills is to know how to count. Like eight and two fingers is all you got. Now I said it before, Liz, and I'll repeat myself. You frittered too much time to the schoolhouse a-learning when you could earn cash-money to the cannery. So what good's writing?"

A STURDY, black-haired woman with high Indian cheekbones stalked noiselessly from the house and leaned a hoe against the clapboards. She rested a moment, calloused hands poised on wide hips. "Liz," she exclaimed, "you're home on Friday!"

The girl jumped up. "Ma, you hoeing the patch again?"

Balancing her weight carefully on the sagging board that served as a porch step, the woman stepped on the packed clay. She noticed the bloodied bandage. "If'n you got hurt to the cannery, there'll be the old Ned to pay," she said sternly, fixing her dark eyes wrathfully on Spider.

"Now she ain't hurt much," Spider said, but he tilted the chair so that the front legs touched the ground.

"Ma," the girl intoned, "I—I lost t-two fingers."

There was something hungry in the way the two women clung to each other and talked soft and patted each other's shoulders understandingly. Ma glared over the girl's shoulder. "The way you set in the shade," she told Spider, "a body'd think you don't have hungry mouths to feed! There's a job o' work in the patch with the ear-corn near ripe. Fetch that hoe, Spider Pickle."

He jumped up like a bumblebee had stung his behind. "I was just readying to go when you legged outside to nag," he protested. "Danged if'n it ain't getting so mean here a man can't rest his butt five seconds 'thout a woman's got to pester!"

"March," Ma ordered.

"I'm readying myself! The way you take on a body'd think the kids don't eat regular."

"It ain't your fault if they do. You had to send your eldest to the cannery just so's you you could set all day. You just come here and look at this poor girl's hand!"

Spider stared at his own hands with troubled eyes. "Some'n is going to pay mighty high for that," he promised. "You can bet your bottom dollar the cannery will pay for her hurt. Ain't no town folks gonna hard-work my daughter and hurt her or by thunder—"

A topless touring car chugged to a stop by the chestnut. A little man dressed in store clothes vaulted over the car side and bustled up the path. Quick blue eyes inventoried the three Pickles, then he smiled easily. "You're the Pickle family," he said.

Ma and Liz waited for Spider to speak. He hooked one finger on the gallus. "Folks hereabouts been calling us that," he admitted. "That mean anything?"

"Mighty glad to know you, Mr. Pickle," the man said, pumping Spider's free hand. "My name is Chauncey Oakes and you can call me Chauncey." He whipped out a card, gave it to Spider. "At your service, Mr. Pickle."

Spider studied the card. He turned it upside down. He reversed the card and looked at the back while Oakes watched carefully. Liz said, "Let me read it, Pop."

Spider stowed the card in his pants pocket. "One a-reading it is enough," he said. "What you want, mister?"

"It's about the accident," Oakes said, smiling cheerily. "I was awfully sorry to hear about your daughter. I went to her boarding house in town, but couldn't find her. How's the hand?"

"The hand don't hurt," Liz said. "It's the two fingers."

Oakes clucked his tongue sympathetically. "That's just why I rushed up here. I rep-

resent Consolidated Insurance, the company that insures the cannery's workers. The moment our president heard about the accident he told me, 'Oakes, you drive right up to the hills and offer that poor girl a lot of money.'" Oakes beamed. "The president empowered me to pay you one thousand dollars for these two fingers, Miss Pickle. Now doesn't that strike you folks as a mighty reasonable settlement?"

The girl's eyes sparkled. Color returned slowly to her pale cheeks. Ma smiled, pleased-like. But Spider spat at the setting toad and drawled, "Only a thousand, eh?"

"Come, come," Oakes said. "That's a lot of money, Mr. Pickle. We pay fifty dollars in cash when the release claim is signed. The balance comes within two weeks." He whipped a paper from his coat pocket and handed it to Spider. "Right in there it tells all about the settlement and the company's generosity."

SPIDER looked as wise as a hoot owl hiding itself in a red oak tree. His eyes strained at the printed words. Liz peered over his shoulder and spelled out the words. "One—thousand—dollars—in full settlement—of the claim."

"Yep," Spider agreed, "that's what it reads."

"Since your daughter is only sixteen and a minor," Oakes explained, "you'll have to sign for her. Let me show you where," and he took the paper back.

Four-five kids that had been playing hide-and-seek in the woods poked their snouts around the shack and giggled. "Scoot," Spider ordered.

"Oh, let 'em stay a minute," Oakes said. He shoved the paper in his coat pocket and fetched out a bulging brown sack. "Peppermints," he told the bug-eyed gigglers. "Peppermint sticks with red rings. Come here, son."

A tow-headed boy edged forward.

"Mind your manners," Ma cautioned sternly.

The boy grabbed the bag. "Thank-ye-mos'-kind," he rattled off, and filed around the shack like a hound-chased fox.

"A smart youngster," Oakes said. "He must get that from his parents."

"I hope you don't rob yourself," Ma said.

"There's more at the store." Oakes pulled two papers from his coat pocket. "I've got to rush right back to town and fix things up so that you get the nine-hundred-fifty dollars right off. Of course, there's the formality of your signature, Mr. Pickle, provided you feel satisfied with the cash settlement."

"It's a fair enough settlement," Ma decided.

"Pen or pencil?" Oakes asked.

Spider teetered on bare heels. "Never had no truck with a pen."

"The pencil it is," Oakes said, handing Spider a yellow one with an attached eraser.

Spider hunched down on the porch and laid the paper flat on the boards. "I'll help you," Liz offered.

"Oh, Miss Pickle," Oakes said, touching her arm politely, "you'll want to hear about the surprise I have arranged for you. What do you think the president told me to buy you?"

"Where does a feller write his name?" Spider asked querulously.

Oakes quick-stepped to the porch and pointed at a dotted line. He watched while Spider scrawled a laborious "X" on the signature line. Oakes took the signed copy, handed Spider a second paper. "Sign this one and keep it. The law says that you're to have a copy of the written agreement."

Then he returned to Liz. "Miss Pickle, I'm going to buy you the fanciest silk dress in town! Yessir, the finest dress and a hat to match. There'll be three yards of red ribbon on the crown and a fine feather just like the ladies wear in New York City. How do you like that, eh?"

Liz just gulped. Ma smiled proudly. Spider said, "You ain't paid the fifty dollars cash yet, mister."

"You're what I'd call a shrewd businessman," Oakes said admiringly. He took out a leather billfold, counted out five new ten-dollar bills and paid Spider. "I'll bet you don't see big money like that in these hills!"

"Oh, I guess we see our share. Uh—would you like a coupla snorts, mister? Right down in my cellar I got a jug of the finest apple liquor in the hills."

"Spider," Ma warned.

"A snort don't hurt nobody. Just say the word, mister," Spider urged, tongue licking lips.

"Thank you," Oakes answered, bowing from the hips. "I'll have a drink some other day." He faced the women, bowed. "Mrs. Pickle, a very good day to you. Miss Pickle, I'm sure that all your troubles are over. Mr. Pickle,"—Oakes pumped Spider's hand—"if you'll pardon me for saying so, it isn't often that I do business with such a shrewd man!"

With that, Oakes backed off a couple of steps then bustled down the path. He jumped into the car, waved cheerily. The motor caught. The car chugged off leaving a plume of red dust to settle over the peaceful hills.

ALL smiles, Liz went and sat on the porch where Spider had left the second paper. Just as Spider began to stuff the money in his pants pocket, Ma snapped, "No you don't, Spider Pickle."

"But, Ma, I was just—"

"Just nothing! That money belongs to Liz. Now she can go back to the schoolhouse and learn to write with her other hand." She took

the bills. "My," she sighed, "that Mister Oakes was a mighty kindly man. When there's hoeing to do in *his* patch, I'll bet he goes right out without no prompting!"

Spider shrugged. "You heard what he said about me being such a shrewd man for business, Ma." He crooked one finger around the gallus and strutted proud as a hill rooster. "Anybody that says Spider Pickle don't take care of his young 'uns is a goldanged—"

"Ma!" Liz shouted.

Ma jumped fence high. "Sakes, girl! You scared the wits from me a-hollering! What ails you?"

The girl rose from the porch, clutching the paper. Her face was the color of fresh-milled flour. "I—I read this paper," she stammered. "It says right in here—" She plopped down hard on the porch.

"What's it say?" Spider wanted to know.

"I read it," the girl said dully. "It says—that the fifty dollars is—in full settlement—of my claim. Oh, Ma! We—we been tricked!"

"Where's it say that?" Spider roared.

"Right in this paper the man left."

Desperately Spider grabbed the paper and ran his finger across the words. Ma snapped, "You hill fool! You know you can't read a danged word!" She strode to the girl. "Liz, you sure that the fifty dollars is all—for the two fingers?"

"Dead sure, Ma. I read it twice over. I remember now that the paper he brought out first he stuck back in his right coat pocket. This'n is different, Ma. He—he took it from the other pocket. He talked so fast and sounded so nice that—"

"Signing a paper he couldn't read," Ma said. "He stood right there, that father of your'n, and let that town man out-slicker him!"

Spider's loose-hung hands clawed the sides of the patched overalls. Down in the thorn tangle, the yellowthroat bubbled music over the hills, but the melody was bitter on Spider's ears. From the woods, the shrill screams of the frolicsome kids rang out sweet and playful. Spider lifted his eyes to the horizon woods where the sky was the color of a winging-away bluebird, and he trembled all over.

"Ain't no use to cry over spilt milk," he mumbled.

"You hill fool," Ma snapped.

"Ain't no use to nag, neither."

"A fine fix you got us in! Now you march right up to that patch and hoe corn for dear life!"

Spider walked on weighted feet to the girl. "I'm right sorry about you losing two fingers, Liz. Maybe I did sound harsh when you come stumbling home. It—it was just my humble way to get your mind off your hurt." He patted her thin shoulders with a trembling hand. Then he hunched over, and with the paper still in one hand, he started down the hill path. "Guess," he mumbled, "I'm just a bump on a dead oak stump."

"Spider!" Ma shrilled. "Where you going?"

Spider turned around when he reached the chestnut that towered over the road. "Going to do what I shoulda done first," he called back. "Reckon Lawyer Simcoe'll be home."

He trudged along the hot, dusty road. He kicked savagely at the dust and raised a cloud. "Gosh-a-mighty!" he swore fervently. "It's a bitter place when a man can't take the word of another 'thout learning how to read writing."

THE winter wind whistled through the die-hard oak leaves the day that Spider Pickle put on his best pair of pants and his high shoes, and walked Liz to the county courthouse for the trial. "That company agent tricked you into signing the paper," Lawyer Simcoe had advised Spider that bitter summer day in the hills. "Your only chance to help Liz is to sue the company in open court. I can't promise that a town jury will render justice for a hill man. They just don't cotton to us down there. And they might reason it out in their peculiar way that the agent was just a smart businessman."

"I'll sue," Spider had decided. "No matter what it costs I'll sue. Maybe I can think up a way to help Liz."

Now the courthouse was lit up like a Christmas tree when they trudged inside. "G-gosh," Liz stammered, staring at the high-domed courtroom, "it's most sky-high."

"Don't worry none, because it ain't," Spider said, calm as a roosting hen. "Just remember that town folks work and sweat like hill men. Only they don't hitch their belts so tight in the winters. Say, there's Lawyer Simcoe."

A small man clad in a rusty black suit and wearing a shoe-string tie nodded to Spider and Liz. "Glad to see real folks," Simcoe said. He had a deep voice. Hill folks knew he could get as hot as a maple-fed stove in a cold snap whenever he got riled.

A tall handsome man in a pin-striped suit and resplendent four-in-hand necktie tapped Simcoe on the shoulder. "You'll get laughed right out of court," he advised, "if you bring this case to trial, Simcoe. Why don't you run for the hills while you've still got a chance?"

"Because I never learned to run, Watkins," Simcoe answered. "Besides, your company doesn't always win its cases."

"We'll win this one," Watkins promised. He brushed a dust fleck off his spotless suit. "It's going to be your funeral, Simcoe. When a dummy signs a release claim, he should know what he's doing."

"I know what I'm going to do in here," Spider intervened, thrusting his chin forward.

"I'm gonna make you skunks crawl outa this room on your bellies, mister. If'n we was in the hills, I'd—"

A bell rang sharply. An attendant shouted unintelligible orders. A stoop-shouldered judge attired in black trailing garments entered and sat on the rostrum while everybody in the room stood quietly. The judge rustled papers on his desk. "The first case," he announced. "Elizabeth Pickle versus Consolidated Insurance. Are the respective parties represented in this court?"

Watkins bowed deferentially. "The company is represented, Your Honor."

Lawyer Simcoe boomed, "We're present, Judge."

The judge turned to Simcoe. "Does your client wish a jury trial, Counselor?"

"Any twelve men will suit us," Simcoe answered.

"Your Honor," Watkins interposed smoothly, "there's hardly any need to waste the county's money on a jury trial. This case is simplicity itself. It is a crime to waste the time of a judge and jury. The company has already liquidated the girl's claim with a cash settlement. We have the guardian's signature on a valid release claim. We—"

Spider Pickle shoved forward. "You call fifty dollars a fair settlement?" he shouted angrily. "If'n you skunks'd come into the hills, I'll fill your hides with a load o' buckshot. I'd—"

"Order in the court!" an attendant bawled.

Titters broke out in the crowded courtroom. The judge hid a smile behind one lifted hand, then tapped with the gavel. "Keep your clients quiet, Counselor," he advised.

"Buckshot!" Spider sputtered. "Buck—"

Simcoe whispered fiercely, "Shut up, Spider. You know townsmen don't like hill men. You'll lose the case before I get started."

Still full of hill fight, Spider sat down.

The judge said, "Any man is entitled to his day in court, gentlemen. If the plaintiff prefers a jury trial, that is his privilege. Counselor?"

"A jury," Simcoe stated.

"Nonsense." Watkins shrugged eloquently.

It took a scant ten minutes to seat twelve grinning, Sunday-dressed town men in the jury box. The case opened. Simcoe rose and faced the jury. He threw back a mane of white hair. The crowd settled back to enjoy the fun.

"I was born behind the Ramapo Rampart," Simcoe thundered, and his full voice rocked the courtroom. "What education I scraped together I got the hard way after I worked a long ten hours every day in my father's fields. Some things I learned in books. Some things I knew the day I was born. That's the way it is with hill men. We were all born with the idea that all men are to be treated fairly and honestly by their fellow men. It never made no difference to us," Simcoe boomed, sweeping his hands in wide circles to include everyone in court, "whether we were dealing with our own folks or decent people from the valleys. Let a townsman stop before our crude doorways and we helped quench his thirst with the sweet water from our wells." Simcoe's voice lowered. "Or, I might add, with the apple liquor in our cellars."

The crowd roared.

"We asked them in to break bread with us," Simcoe continued. "When they went on their way again, we wished them god-speed." Slowly he turned and pointed a long bony finger at Chauncey Oakes, seated at the defense table. "One day that man came into our hills. He showed my trusting client a paper that promised a thousand dollars for the loss of my client's two fingers. That's a fair sum. We admit that, gentlemen of the jury. Then why," Simcoe demanded, "does the company come into court today and contend that the client's own father signed a release claim in which his daughter receives a paltry fifty dollars as settlement for his daughter's lost fingers?"

WATKINS rose, coughed. "Your Honor," he said smoothly, "we shall explain that satisfactorily when our side of this simple case is presented. If the plaintiff's counselor would only finish his colorful autobiography and get down to facts, the time of this court will not be further wasted. I'm sure that these honorable men"— Watkins bowed to the seated jury—"will have sufficient wisdom to judge the pretentiousness of the counselor's claims."

Watkins sat down. Two or three jurors nodded. Simcoe threw back his head and his voice boomed like a drumming partridge on a hill ridge in spring. "I was born in the hills," he said. "I aim to die there and be buried by the red oak in my front yard. But before anybody lays me out in a bury-box, I aim to set right the perfidious wrong that has been done to this poor, maimed girl!"

Simcoe turned to the judge, his voice softened. "Your Honor, does the court have in its possession the release claim that the defense contends Spider Pickle signed?"

"It does," the judge answered. He pushed forward a paper. Lawyer Simcoe picked it up, read slowly. "Fifty dollars in full settlement of the accident claimed by the said Elizabeth Pickle." He turned to Spider. "Get right up in that chair, Spider, and get ready to tell your story."

Spider shuffled to the witness stand. The court clerk swore him in promptly.

Simcoe asked, "What's your name?"

"Spider Pickle."

A juror grinned. A titter ran around the room.

"Are you the father of the plaintiff, Elizabeth Pickle?"

"Well," Spider drawled, crossing one leg, "she ain't never had no reason to say contrariwise."

Simcoe pointed at Chauncey Oakes. "Do you recognize that man?"

Spider uncrossed his legs and leaned forward. Oakes shifted uncomfortably. Spider sniffed. "Reckon," he said, "I could smell him again anywheres."

The crowd roared. The judge beat his desk with the gavel. When the court quieted down, Simcoe picked up the release claim, strode to the jury box. "I want you men to see this paper. You'll notice that the signature is an X."

Watkins shouted, "Your Honor, I want it on the record that a man's X is his valid signature whenever he can't write! That is the law."

The judge nodded. Simcoe turned, said, "We grant that that is the law. Wherever a man can't write, his X is a valid signature."

Watkins sat down and smiled. Oakes whispered to Watkins, "There goes his case. He was a fool to admit that in court!" Watkins nodded complacently.

"Now," Simcoe continued, "each of you have seen the paper on which the defense bases its claim to a fair settlement. You have all seen the X that they contend my client wrote." He laid the paper on the judge's desk. "Now I intend to prove in open court that Spider Pickle didn't sign that Consolidated release claim."

A startled murmur ran through the court. Watkins muttered, "Perjury, eh?"

Simcoe asked, "Clerk, have you a piece of paper?"

The clerk produced paper.

"A pen?"

The clerk handed Simcoe his fountain pen.

"Thank you. Just help me put this table before the jury."

The two shifted a small table so that it was directly before the jury. Simcoe laid the sheet of paper on the table. He placed the fountain pen beside the paper. He beckoned to Spider. "For the edification of the judge and jury," Simcoe instructed, "I want you, Spider Pickle, to write your legal signature in court."

Spider uncrossed one lean leg. "Don't know what edification be," he admitted, "but here goes."

The room quieted. In the back tier, someone coughed and it sounded like a thunderclap. Spider shuffled to the table. He picked up the pen. He looked at the point. He closed one eye and squinted along the pen as if it were a rifle.

Every juror leaned forward. The judge craned his neck to see. Then quick as a weasel a-cleaning out a hill hen coop, Spider brought down the pen and wrote something across the paper.

Simcoe snatched up the paper. He passed it to the bug-eyed jury. They crowded around to see what Spider had written. In flowing characters that did not falter once across the paper, the hill man had written—*Spider Pickle.*

"I contend," Lawyer Simcoe pronounced dramatically to the awed courtroom, "that no man signs his mark on a paper when he can write in open court as good as that! Your Honor, I ask for a directed verdict and a judgment of one thousand dollars for my maimed client!"

Watkins got to his feet and sputtered and fumed. Chauncey Oakes turned as white as the paper that Spider had written on. Then Watkins paraded witness after witness before the court. He cited legal precedent after precedent and Simcoe just sat peaceful in court and let Watkins talk.

The damage had been done. The crowd knew it. The jury knew it. When they trooped back into court, the answer was written on their faces. There was no need for the foreman to announce, "Your Honor, we find that the plaintiff's claim is valid. We award one thousand dollars to—"

The crowd rose as one man and cheered the hill folks.

SPIDER PICKLE and Liz labored up the long hill road to home. The late sun licked at the spur ridges. Two jays jabbered in the woods and a late flying crow flapped to the evening crow caucus.

Spider complained, "These store shoes be killing me, Liz."

The girl smiled.

"Ain't no town man a-stinging a hill man," Spider allowed.

She kept right on putting one good foot ahead of the other.

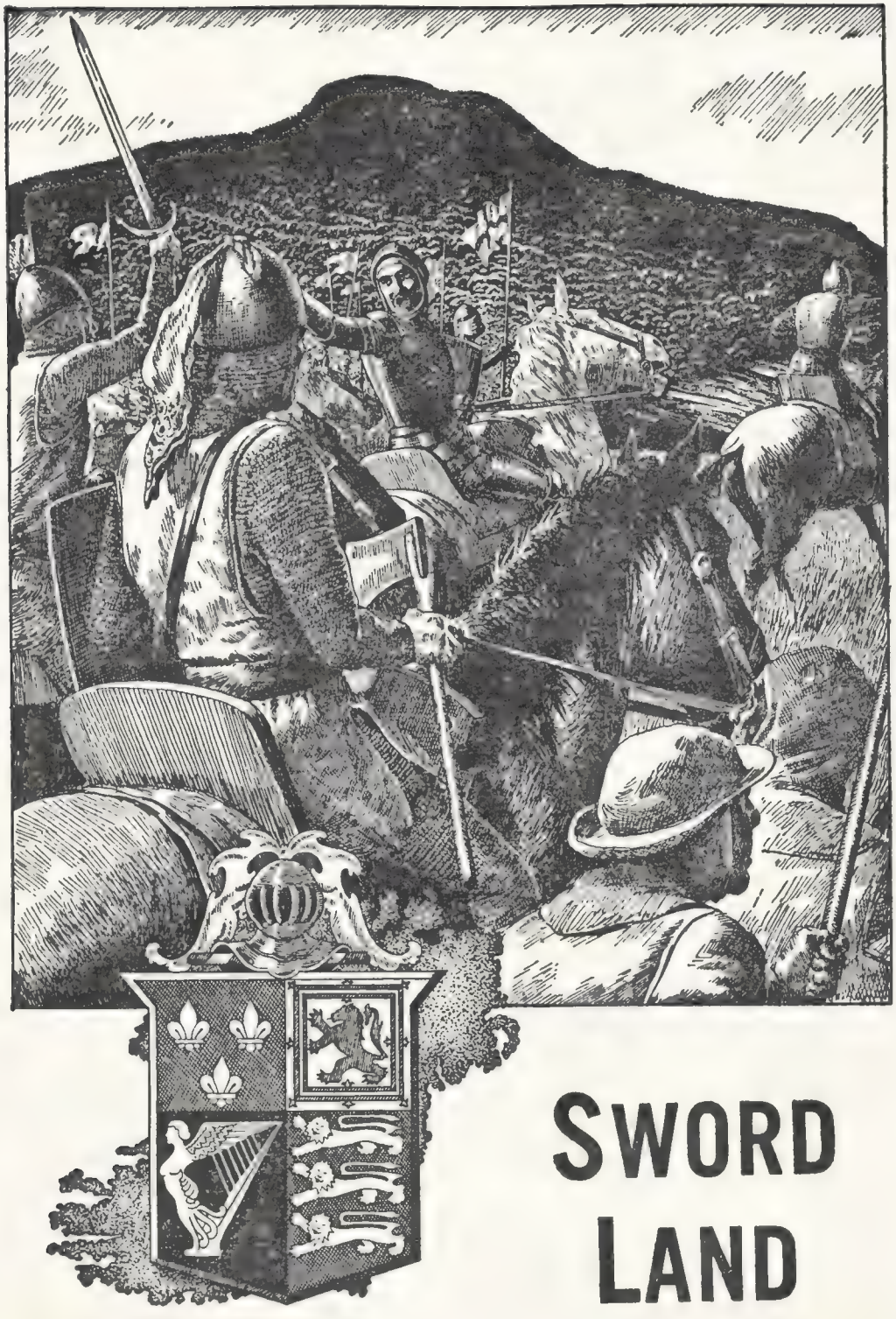
"Maybe reading is some important," Spider granted, shooting a sidelong glance at the girl's right hand where the healed stubs of two fingers showed.

She nodded.

"Gosh-a-mighty, girl!" Spider swore. "Ain't you never gonna say nothing?"

The girl stopped, faced Spider on the lonely road. "Pop, I always said you did right by your family. It ain't every Pop'd take all the time to set right a wrong done to his daughter." She patted his hand, blue with cold. "Pop, I was proud of you today. Why it only took you four months of everyday work to learn to write your own name. Thanks, Pop."

Spider grinned. "Hill-smart, I am," he chuckled.



SWORD LAND

Before us lay the Irish camp—we could hear the uproar of the great force settling itself cozily for the night.

By HENRY JOHN COLYTON

ILLUSTRATED BY L. STERNE STEVENS

THE STORY THUS FAR:

IN THE years 1169-71, Ireland was invaded by a handful of Norman knights, men-at-arms and Welsh archers—less than a thousand men all told—the Norman adventurers having been brought there by DERMOT MAC MURROUGH, ex-king of Leinster, with the promise of land as a reward for their assistance in putting down his enemies. Among the bold company who set out for Ireland to fight for the Irish chieftain—with the indifferent sanction of their king, HENRY II of England—were SIR BRIAN FITZ-BRIAN, his friends EDMUND DE ST. ERNE and MILO DE CLYDACH, FITZ-STEPHEN, DE PRENDERGAST, DE BARRI, MOUNTMAURICE, the GERALDINES and other impoverished noblemen lured by the chance for riches and power in a new land.

The story is told, many years later, by Fitz-Brian . . . Being, in his forty-first year, confined to bed with serious injuries sustained during a joust, he decides to set down "a true account of the Irish wars—dealing particularly with the treachery of MAC BREACH, chief of Ballinmish, and his brother ABBOT AYMON of Killanore, the massacre at Dun Cathach, and the remarkable deeds of the LADY CEREDWIN DE MORREISE . . ."

* * *

The Norman invaders have spent the first months since their landing on the bleak deserted coast at Dun Cathach restoring the ruins of an old fortress there, in preparation for the operations to come. Early that spring, during a terrible storm, a ship breaks up within sight of Dun Cathach—and Fitz-Brian and Milo brave the sea to rescue the survivors, among them being the abbot of Killanore, the lovely Lady Ceredwin de Morreise, and her father SIR ROBERT DE MORREISE. Fitz-Brian, with the assistance of EADMER, his attendant and confidant, fits out the bedraggled girl with some of his own clothing, and is shocked to learn that she is betrothed to the abbot of Killanore's brother—the fierce and hairy chief of Ballinmish, Conn Mac Breagh, who is reputed to have one wife already.

Three days later, Mac Breagh turns up to take Ceredwin, her father and the abbot back to Ballinmish. Fitz-Brian watches Ceredwin leave in the company of Mac Breagh with misgivings —and jealousy.

Then comes the news they have been awaiting: Fitz-Stephen has anchored in the mouth of the Bannow nearby with a ship full of armed men, and the trouble is about to begin! Next day, the Normans join forces with Dermot Mac Murrough, and set out to lay siege to the walled town of Wexford, south of Dublin.

Wexford falls, with scant loss to the invader, and the Normans retire to Dermot's city of Ferns to celebrate the victory. Dermot awards Wexford to Fitz-Stephen and Dun Cathach to St. Erne. The next attack is made—against Ossory, northeast of Ferns. And after a bitter battle, the Ossory forces are put to rout.

Soon after, the Lady Ceredwin turns up at Ferns! She has run away from Ballinmish—and from Mac Breagh, who had indeed another wife, ETHNEA, who tried to kill Ceredwin and was herself slain by Mac Breagh in the brawl that followed the wedding ceremony.

Fitz-Brian takes Ceredwin to the nearby convent, at Kileeda, for safety—promising to return for her when things quiet down. For it is clear that trouble can be expected from more than one quarter for Dermot and the Normans.

Fitz-Brian and Fitz-Stephen locate two fine pieces of territory adjoining St. Erne's holdings, and assist each other in building their strongholds—Milo's "Castle Perilous" and Fitz-Brian's "Pigsty," named from the boar's head on his coat-of-arms. But the natives are not too friendly; Fitz-Brian dispatches Eadmer to Wales to raise reinforcements.

One day a messenger appears at Pigsty, purporting to be from Milo. He is being attacked and needs help. Fitz-Brian and his men hurry to Castle Perilous, only to find it deserted. The messenger confesses he is LUGAID, brother of Mac Breagh. Turning toward home, Fitz-Brian runs into Milo and his followers. Milo had received a similar message—and now the two Normans realize they have been duped in order to prevent their sending help to St. Erne. Together they hurry to Dun Cathach, where a grisly scene awaits them. All of St. Erne's men have been massacred in cold blood. St. Erne himself lies in the courtyard, his body horribly disfigured, his precious silver cross gone

The lone survivor is FATHER DENIS, who recounts a shocking tale of treachery. Mac Breagh's forces had laid siege to Dun Cathach. Abbot Aymon, in parley with St. Erne, had sworn upon the holiest relic of Killanore that Dermot and Fitz-Stephen were dead and Fitz-Brian and Milo captured. A ship was waiting, he said, to take St. Erne and his men back to Wales. If the offer was refused, the lives of Fitz-Brian and Milo would be forfeit. Unaware that the relic was empty, the abbot's oath meaningless, St. Erne had accepted the terms and led his men out of the fortress unarmed. Mac Breagh's men had fallen upon them . . .

Hungry for vengeance, Fitz-Brian and Milo ride to the camp of the enemy. Disguised as Irish kernes, they slip past the guards, but are soon apprehended. Milo is slain and Fitz-Brian taken prisoner. Mac Breagh challenges Fitz-Brian to a fight without weapons. Fitz-Brian knocks out the Irish chieftain and seeing St. Erne's cross around his neck seizes it. At that moment, Abbot Aymon rushes forward shouting "Sacrilege!" and lifting his axe, severs the left hand of the Norman knight.

Fitz-Brian regains consciousness to find himself in the crypt of St. Ibar, under the care of a friendly monk, BROTHER TEAGUE. He curses himself for the death of his two dearest friends —St. Erne and Milo—and weakened with fever, obsessed with his guilt-complex, Fitz-Brian temporarily loses his mind.

While Fitz-Brian languishes in the gloomy crypt, great events are taking place in Ireland. Richard de Clare, called STRONGBOW, has landed with a great force, taken Waterford and Dublin for Dermot and swept everything before him. He has married Dermot's daughter, AOIFE, and hopes to succeed Dermot as king of all Ireland.

When Fitz-Brian's wits return to him, he lies in a cave on a bed of sheepskins and over him stand Eadmer and Ceredwin! Eadmer explains that when he returned from Wales with reinforcements and found Fitz-Brian missing, he had gone to Ceredwin and together they had searched for him. They had found him at last at Killanore—and the Abbot Aymon being away, the kindly Brother Teague had let them take Fitz-Brian away, to hide him here on the island of Inch-na-droa while Ceredwin nursed him back to a semblance of health.

They make the long hard journey to Dublin where Ceredwin goes to Strongbow's court to become lady-in-waiting to Aoife. Fitz-Brian, feeling himself a cripple, contemplates entering a monastery, but Ceredwin persuades him to return to Dun Cathach. There he spends the winter in seclusion, regaining his strength.

In the spring, he pays a visit to Fitz-Stephen at his castle nearby, and his old friend tells him they are in a dangerous position. King Henry, jealous of the success of the Norman conquerors, has placed an embargo on all shipping to Ireland. Soon comes news even more serious: King Dermot has died at Ferns. The invaders stand alone in a hostile land.

PART IV

THEY came circling down on us when the news got out, like carrion crows around a dying sheep. We were outlaws, thanks to King Henry's jealousy, and we found what that meant.

The first trouble came on Whitsunday.

Strongbow had gone with his wife to Ferns to bury King Dermot, leaving de Cogan in charge. And Hasculf Mac Torquil, who had been lord of Dublin, paid a return call. He sailed up the Liffey with sixty galleys full of his friends and relations, all hot for loot and revenge. When they came ashore a-whooping, they were enough to scare anyone—great big hulks, all in mail, with red-painted shields and axes waving like feather fans, and wild eyes goggling under steel helms. They charged the East Gate in as orderly a fashion as you'd want, and de Cogan, who was as tough a fighting man as ever whetted a blade, admitted afterwards that his liver was fairly scared up into his lights. Of course, he didn't have enough men, thanks to King Henry. But he came charging out of the East Gate to receive the company.

The Danes had a gigantic Berserker along—John the Mad, they called him—and he chopped down ten armed men with his great axe as if they'd been rotten trees. De Cogan withdrew in a hurry, and slammed the gate shut just in time. But in the meantime his brother Richard, who had sneaked out of the back gate on the south side with a few dozen men, now ran around in the rear of the invading host and created a bit of a diversion. De Cogan emerged again in good order with his own handful, and the surprise attack worked. It took the combined efforts of a dozen men to kill John the Mad—he was still staggering around streaming blood with his head nearly severed when Hasculf scampered off to his ships in hot pursuit of the rest of his party. Somebody caught him by a leg just as he was climbing overside, and fetched him back to the city. De Cogan was so short of rations and money that he had concluded to hold Hasculf for ransom. But Hasculf was high-nosed and snorty.

"We came with only a handful of men," says his lordship. "Let me go and next time I'll show you a real fight." Which was good spirit, but bad sense. After that there was nothing to do but whack off his head, which was done.

Good, wasn't it? Five thousand men against fewer than five hundred is odds enough to scare the bravest. You couldn't trust de Cogan with the dice or your lady wife, but he was better than any mad Berserker in battle, because he was cool and crafty.

The news of that affair missed me, for I had gone to Pigsty to collect my neglected rents in the shape of grain and pork from Mac Cloghan. I did well there. A badly stretched tale of my experiences at the camp of the Mac Breagh and at Killanore had leaked through to Mac Cloghan somehow, and he gawked at the stump of my arm with admiration in his eyes and stacked up the sausages. When I brought half the supplies to Fitz-Stephen at the Crag, his stick and dirt palace was nearly done, and he was celebrating the news of Hasculf's defeat by getting good and drunk on ancient Irish thrice-tested ale. I tried to help him, but I couldn't get drunk. I was worried about Ceredwin. I thought, if anything happened to her while I was off making a deal for cheeses and bacon like a damned huckster—

"I'm no good at a fight any more," I thought, "but I can be with her. Maybe I can help her in some feeble way or other."

Fitz-Stephen rashly gave me thirty-six men—against my advice, which he was not quite sober enough to hear—to take to the defense of Dublin. We set off, stopping briefly at Dun Cathach to collect Ebba and the half of the men who were getting the sourest-tempered from want of exercise.

We were pretty well armed and mounted. Having lost my hauberk, I had borrowed Evan Vawr's spare brigandine, and I had an Irish axe, that I'd been practicing with all spring.

I wondered about Fitz-Stephen's men. They were good Welsh lads, of course—but who wants to be led by a cripple? They were polite and respectful, though, and when Eadmer argued with me over a camp-site in the vale of Glendalough, one of them rebuked him in a heavy Welsh accent, using personal descriptions that you don't hear in church. We made quite a party, and we made plenty of noise when we galloped through villages and the raths of chieftains, hoping to make an impression. I guess we did, for they mostly scuttled for cover. When we were coming down the slope of the hill that they call the Scalp, we saw a gang of yellow-shirted kernes ahead of us, and we got ready for trouble—but I recognized the dun horse of the leader as Donall Cavanaugh's, unless he'd swapped recently. We came up with them, and Donall recognized me, and welcomed me heartily. He had old Morice Regan along with him. The old interpreter looked so sad and aged with his grief for the mainly unlamented Dermot that I let him interpret, although I knew enough Erse by now to enjoy his rhetoric.

Donall Cavanaugh grinned at me. He was a fine young roughneck by now, sinewy and well-shapen, with a fine black beard and a flashing eye. I asked him what was new in Dublin, and he looked sober.

"Archbishop O'Toole is rousing the clans, Mac Brian. The foreigners are to be driven like cattle. And King Rory has sent messages by sea to the vikings of the Isles to come along if they'd like to join the fun. I am on my way now to bring the news of it to Strongbow. If you go on to Dublin, you'll no doubt be leaving of it face down in a dung cart—they've got more trouble than food there, they have."

"You're going there yourself, didn't you say?"

"Well, it is like this. My father was maybe no saint of God, Mac Brian, but he was my

father, and a good father he was to me. Never a fight he was in but he let me join him, from the time I was no higher than his sword-hilt. His friends are my friends. My men here have brought a little grain, and hay for Strongbow's horses, the poor beasts."

I shook his hand. For a clipped groat, I'd have kissed him, whiskers and all.

Dublin was inhabited only by a few sullen Irish-Danes who hadn't the means of escape, the garrison and the castle inmates. The chieftains whom Strongbow had feasted so short a time before when they had sworn fervent allegiance to him, were off in the hills, gathering their tribesmen to come smash him. The terrible old king of Leinster, who had stood his staunch friend, was cold in the earth, and the king of England, whom he had thought to serve, was his enemy. He stood alone, if ever man stood alone among his foes.

You wouldn't have known it, though.

When I entered his hall, he was seated on the high dais in a baggy old gown trimmed with mangy-looking squirrel-skins, chatting with the de Cogans and Raymond le Gros, now and again staring at the small fire that sputtered on the hearth, or turning toward Aoife, who sat beside him, lovely as ever, except that her waist was beginning to thicken. She wore a plain dark gown, but on her white brow was a diadem of Irish gold. She was embroidering something, and an old woman stood behind her, gnarled hands folded in self-satisfaction. Beside her, a tall girl in brown straightened herself from an inspection of the work, a long braid of amber hair falling over her shoulder.

My heart gave two loud bangs, and then stopped. I forgot the earl and his lady too. I prayed that I could walk the length of the hall decently, and without falling on my face, but the saints weren't doing any miracles that day. I crab-hobbled endlessly along, leaning on Cavanaugh's arm, among staring servants and lounging off-duty men-at-arms and lean and shabby knights—and at last the seneschal was bellowing my name at the earl, and Ceredwin turned her wide blue eyes upon me. I heated up, and bowed.

"I've brought forty-six men, messire," I said. "Thirty-six from Fitz-Stephen at the Crag and ten from Dun Cathach."

"And yourself, Fitz-Brian." The earl extended his hand. "I understand you fight like twenty men and only eat rations for one, so you're welcome to Dublin. Aoife, here's an old friend of yours."

She exclaimed, in quite good French, that she was glad to see me again. I felt pleased and embarrassed, and for a little I was too excited to see the earl clearly—I'd lived so long in the winds I'd forgot my manners. But as I was ushered to a seat near the earl's chair of presence, I saw him well enough. Strongbow had red hair and freckles and the fine white skin that goes with them. His eyes were gray and bright as sea water in the sun. He was a tall man, but none of your burly roisterers—his features were delicate as a woman's, almost, and his voice was gentle. No warrior, you'd say—and you'd be wrong. There was about him such an air of serene confidence that you would have followed him to hell and out again.

I was carefully explaining to the earl that I was not a fighting man any longer. He laughed gently and said he'd heard different.

"No," I said soberly, "no matter how kind you are, you and my friends, the fact remains that I'm crippled. I'd be a drag on a fighting force. I've brought these men, and God knows we've need of them, from what Cavanaugh's been telling me. Here in Dublin I'd be only another mouth to feed; only I brought my own rations, because I've a particular reason to be here."

"The Mac Breagh and his friends, they'll be along," nodded the earl.

"I'm going to take care of them, if the Lord aids me," I said, and then I ventured to look at Ceredwin. She was looking straight at me, her cheeks glowing pink, and her eyes very bright. She nodded, and went back to Aoife's baby-linen. De Clare caught our glances.

"You know the Lady Ceredwin de Morreise?"

"Yes, messire." I rose and bowed to her then. "She did some excellent embroidery-work for me not long ago." Aoife's puzzled eyes roved over me. I didn't look embroidered. I was shabby and dirty from the long ride, my hose had been snagged and ripped by brambles, and I was wearing a greasy old leather shirt under my brigandine. So the earl and his lady stared at Ceredwin instead, and she turned from pink to poppy-red, and stuck the needle in her thumb, and said something—in English, I think. Something squeezed my heart tight and then let go again, and I drew a long breath. Whatever happened, I would be near her for a while.

CHAPTER XII

THE ROUSING OF THE CLANS

IN A way, as Maurice Fitz-Gerald remarked, it was a pretty compliment to us, the way the numbers of our besiegers swelled. Every day saw more red-cloaked chieftains rallying their tribal roughnecks to show off under our walls, and whooping it up at night with the rest in the great camp. Every incoming tide brought more ships to cast anchor in the harbor. We were bottled up tight by land and sea—even if Mountmaurice could have induced King Henry to let our reinforcements come, they would have had to battle their way to us. This was the moment I had been dread-

ing since we had first set foot in Ireland—the moment when we would have our backs to the wall. But now it had come, I wasn't nearly as scared as I'd been before. I wasn't good for much, I figured, but I could stand guard on the walls and release a more active man for duty that way. So I hobbled up and down the battlements, thankful that the weather was mild and warm. I had a good view of King Rory's enormous camp—all in the wildest confusion, with the bawling cattle blundering into the fancy silk tents of the chiefs, and even into the more modest pavilion of Archbishop O'Toole. I always respected O'Toole. He was no fawning hypocrite; he disliked us foreigners intensely, and had done his best to unite the wrangling chiefs to run us out. Now he looked like succeeding.

Four weeks had gone by. The earl was cheerful and busy about the fortifications, the de Cogans rolled dice with Maurice Fitz-Gerald and le Gros for huge sums, all imaginary. No word came from Mountmaurice. The Irish swarmed around our walls in ever-increasing numbers. There must have been at least sixty thousand all told, and my perch on the battlements was no place for an easily discouraged man. Inside, fewer than seven hundred of us—horse, foot and archers. The walls of Dublin were stout and high, having been built by the Danes, and the Irish were content to have themselves a good gorge and entertainment and wait for us to be starved out.

Hunger is a thing that gets less difficult to endure as you grow weaker in the knees, believe me. I had brought rations, as I said, meal and cheese and some pretty rank local bacon. I took half of it to Ceredwin, and she nibbled at the cheese for courtesy's sake, and then said she'd rather fast, thank you, and her eyes laughed up at me out of a face that had grown white and hollow-cheeked. My heart misgave me. You can't be romantical with your arms full of cheese and bacon, of course.

"Look, Ceredwin," I said, "if the city falls—"

"How you talk," she said. "The city's not going to fall. I've just talked with an archer who has second-sight, and he says they'll all go away."

"That's nice," I said sourly. Of course, if the city fell, I'd be dead, along with my betters, and she—Aoife could not save her from the Mac Breagh. I didn't know what to do. I gave the rations I'd saved for her to the mess sergeant, along with what was left of mine. It spread pretty thin among seven hundred of us, of course, and there were times, when I walked my rounds, that I thought of that cheese and bacon with tears in my eyes, and I wished to God I'd held out on the mess sergeant.

We tightened our belts and endured it. Our tempers were sore and touchy; the agonized waiting, the swarms around our walls, more than the gnawing in our bellies, made fights break out here and there among us.

Five weeks of it. Archbishop O'Toole came under the barbican in full regalia to ask for parley. I was on duty at the time, but I heard from Richard de Cogan that we would be allowed to take ship for home if Strongbow and his friends would relinquish all claims to the territories that were sword land. Where would that leave us? All of us paupers, and some of us outlaws. We couldn't accept.

I tried to sleep all I could when not on duty, and had some awful nightmares. I tried to substitute sleep for eating; I hated to take rations from sound men who could fight. It didn't work too well, though. My legs rather gave out from under me once, on duty, and somebody told on me, and that brought Eadmer roaring down on me, and Ceredwin at his heels with a jug of priceless hoarded wine. It went to my head at once and I was as drunk as a hermit at a fair.

"You," I hiccuped, prodding the air with an uncertain forefinger in Eadmer's general direction, "get her outa this. See? Get her out. Before they come in. The Mac Breagh's out there. He'll get her, 'f you don't do's I tell you. Fetch her home to Wales. See?"

Ceredwin assumed a look of weary patience, sitting up on her heels beside me where I lay sprawled on the guard-room floor rolled in Eadmer's mantle. "I forgot it wouldn't suit you on an empty stomach," she said. "Don't talk utter foolishness, messire, even if you are jingled. Even if Eadmer could get me out, as he can't, I wouldn't dare go. They think my father ran out on us, and I wouldn't want to confirm such talk by my own behavior."

" 'S different—you're a woman. Good thing, too." She hung hazily over me. I was happy, and glad to see her, and wanted to keep her near me. "Where'sh your papa now?"

"I—I don't know, messire," she answered, looking down. "He was in Dublin, but he left, they say, before we came here from Killanore. He may have gone to France on business. I've not had any word."

"*He's* eating hearty, I'll bet," I said. "Traitors usually do. 'Scuse me, madame. Forgot he's a relation of yours. Lady can't help her relatives."

"Hush up, my lord," Eadmer implored, putting his paw over my mouth. I tried to take a bite out of his finger, and he desisted.

There were skirmishes almost daily. A band of our knights would ride out from the barbican, and gallop their horses around, trying to draw the Irish within bowshot of the archers on the walls. I let le Gros have my Boru for this work—Boru was the only horse in Dublin who was strong enough to carry our fat boy. The Irish were happy to play this kind of tag with us, but they had had experience with Welsh bows before, and they weren't having any more. They didn't come within shooting distance.

They preferred to squat behind a rickety wooden stockade they'd knocked together, and feast the visiting Danes on stolen cattle, and wait for us to starve out. Nobody was going to rescue us. They knew that.

De Cogan prowled like a restless tomcat. Strongbow walked the ramparts, his face grave but serene, excusing himself politely when his inwards rumbled. Fitz-Gerald tugged at his thick moustaches. He came into the guard-room one night, after what we called supper, and found me telling the old story of how my grandfather saved our castle of Pen Mynydd from the Welsh. Even an old tale is better to listen to than the growling of your empty guts. Fitz-Gerald waited until I'd ended.

"You say your grandfather made a sortie, Fitz-Brian. I'd rather forgotten the story. How many men did he have?"

"Eleven besides himself, if you count the chaplain."

"And the odds?"

I grinned. "They get bigger every time my uncle tells the story. But there must have been several hundred of the Welsh, anyway."

He nodded and strolled out, weaving slightly in his gait; the stiffness had gone out of his knees too. We started up a song.

THE next day, right after the usual early morning skirmish, word began to pass along the walls. The earl wanted every jack of us in the castle. I offered to stay on guard, but the man-at-arms, a big husk of de Cogan's, shook his head.

"Every knight is needed, messire," he said.

I had to stop and rest twice on the way to the castle, and might have felt embarrassed if I hadn't noticed others who had to halt and lean up against the walls as they went.

The great hall of the castle was full of the heavenly smell of stewing meat! Servants were capering around the cook-pots on the fires. We goggled at each other, and stared at the earl, on the high dais. He was fully armed; he smiled at us and waved his hand. "It's horse. All we could spare, men. Eat hearty."

We swarmed around the cook-pots, thrusting out our helms for the stew, getting scalded and yelping merrily. It was as if the earl had worked a miracle for us. When the uproar had silenced itself in stew, he began to speak to us, in that soft voice of his, and we looked up and saw that the de Cogans, le Gros and Fitz-Gerald had joined him on the dais, wiping their whiskers. Fitz-Gerald winked at me.

"Men," said the earl, "gallant knights and brave men-at-arms—this is getting tiresome, don't you think? No word has yet come from Mountmaurice, and we are getting no reinforcements or supplies, so he must have been unsuccessful. We are alone, and our enemies swarm about us. Their terms of surrender are insupportable. It is time to run some risk."

We yelled, the stew sloshing around in our shrunken interiors. He nodded, his bright eyes seeming to seek the glance of every man there.

"Go now, and make ready. Clean yourselves, and scrape the dirt and hair off your mugs. Some of you don't look human, and it's not knightly to scare your enemies to death. See to your weapons, and feed your horses. Test your bow-cords. And be at the West Gate by evensong."

Fitz-Gerald sang out in a heavy Welsh accent, "Who wants to bet where King Rory will be this night?" and roars of laughter answered him as we trooped out. Robert de Barri, who had offered me his arm, since between weakness and my bad leg I was making heavy going of it, said, "I got a horse for you, Fitz-Brian. He came within a span of the stew-pot, but he can still stand up—if you hold his head. You don't want to miss this, and I know le Gros has your horse."

"I wouldn't mind getting a chance to work an axe on those sons of the devil," I said. "Thanks for the horse."

"Better wait till you see him," he answered.

The sullen citizens of Dublin might have guessed that something was up when we assembled at evensong, all clean and shaved so that the hollows in our faces showed up. I was examining my new horse with some doubt about de Barri's claim that he could stand up under me, when an excited serving boy of the earl's came trotting up to me.

"S-sir Brian Fitz-Brian?"

"That's me. Get your breath."

"Sh-she sent you this." He thrust a wad of cloth at me and ran away. I shook it out. It was a sleeve, a brown sleeve trimmed with bright embroidery at the wrist, that had been ripped ruthlessly out of a dress. A gang of half-witted knights surrounded me at once, whooping and making remarks. I grinned. I took off my helm and held it in the bend of my left elbow, and thrust the sleeve through the carrying ring on the comb. Then I tied it securely with the help of my teeth.

"I used to be called the handsomest man in Leinster," I said with a simper. "Can I help it if they still go for me?" They hooted at me, but I felt wonderful. I vaulted into the saddle light as a bird to a bough.

WE formed ranks at the West Gate and started for the barbican. I rode with thirty-some knights in the van with de Cogan. Behind us came a hundred heavy-armed foot and sixty bowmen. Le Gros led a similar party behind us, and the earl brought up the rear. The setting sun blazed on our mail and burnished helms.

I thrust the sleeve through the carrying ring on the comb, and tied it securely with the help of my teeth.

As soon as the earl's men got clear of the barbican, we wheeled out of column into line—a triple line, under the same three leaders. A horn sounded dolefully behind me. I was glad to be in the van, where I could see where I was going. Before us rose the rickety stockade of the Irish camp, and we could hear the uproar of the great force settling itself cozily for the night, and smell the roasting meat. Far off to the right I saw Donall Cavanaugh on his dun horse, surrounded by his gang of yelling gallowglasses and kernes. I don't think I was frightened. I could feel and hear Ceredwin's sleeve flapping on the evening wind, and my long-handled steel-headed axe was ready in my hand. It was good to feel that I was still considered useful, and I had high hopes of encountering the Mac Breagh.

We set our horses at a slow gallop toward the tents of the High King of Ireland, Rory O'Connor of Connaught. The sun was sinking over the summer fields, and the quiet of twilight was at hand, beyond the noise of the vast camp and the soft thudding of our horses' hoofs. So we seven hundred rode against the sixty thousand.

Well, you can read about it in the chronicles, or hear the jongleurs sing about it. How we burst through the flimsy barricade with loud howls of greeting, and gave the united forces of Ireland the fright of their lives, so that they picked up what they could grab and ran off in all directions, screeching that the foreigners were on them—how the panic spread and spread on either hand as we opened up and let drive through tents and huts—how the High King Rory himself got up out of his bathtub and scampered for the wilds, clad only in a chaste towel—how the bloody swords and axes rose and fell wherever there was a knot of warriors making a desperate stand—how the flames began to rise up from the wrecked camp to flare our triumph to the walls of Dublin and to the viking ships in the harbor—Let someone else

tell about these matters. I won't say more, it might sound as if I were bragging. But as I look back over my fighting career, that is the moment that gives me most pride, that sortie from the siege of Dublin, and I thank the saints that I was one of the seven hundred that put the sixty thousand to flight. Yes, and I think grandfather would be pleased, too; he favored long odds.

In the dawn we counted up the score. The fires were still flaming in the abandoned camp, where lay the bodies of fifteen hundred Irish dead, the ships were making desperate efforts to get out of reach on the morning tide before we could give them our full attention, food and supplies enough to last us a year had been strewn all around the fields, and one—just one—of our Welsh archers was having a serious axe-gash in his arm attended to. That was all. And enough! Remarkable? Well, it was no wonder that we flocked to early Mass just as we were, all dust and blood, in humble gratitude for what the Lord had done for us. For men alone could not have done it.

I hunted up Ceredwin as soon as I got back to the castle. She came out to me at once. She had watched all night, and her eyes were heavy-lidded, but she gave me a glorious smile. Then she walked straight up to me and put her arms around my neck and hugged me.

"Thanks for your favor, madame," I said. "It brought me luck." I tried to keep from embracing her, and then I thought, what the hell, I'm not a monk yet, so I embraced her delicately with my good arm.

"Did you find the Mac Breagh?"

That had been the big disappointment of the night, so far as I was concerned. "No, damn it," I grumbled. "He got away, I guess, for I had no sight of him."

"Never mind," she said, "you'll get him. Wouldn't you like to kiss me? I washed my face special."

"Are you glad to see me?"

"Of course I am."

I felt good. I bent and kissed her smooth cheek. "There, that'll do you until this evening. Wait till you see me at the feast! I helped myself to King Rory's Sunday shirt and breeches."

CHAPTER XIII

THE GHOSTS OF DUN CATHACH

WELL, the end of the siege left us resting easily on the necks of the Irish, so I felt free to attend to my private affairs, the Mac Breaghs. Eadmer and I packed up a few supplies, and took us each a spare nag from those that had been captured. I'd recovered Boru from le Gros, and was relieved to find he wasn't sway-backed. I left Ceredwin with strict orders to bide where she was until I came to her personally—I could only hope that she would mind me. Before I left, I had a talk with her in the anteroom beside the great hall, and, as usual, failed to say what I wanted most to say. She examined my arm and had me walk up and down before her.

"Do you have any pain?" she asked me, grave as a court physician.

"Only on wet days," I said. "And of course my fingers keep itching and tingling—the ones that aren't there."

"I wonder why that is," she pondered. "I've heard of it before. Does your back ache?"

"Now and again," I answered. "This wide leather belt I'm wearing helps. How do you like my walk? Elegant, eh? That dip and wabble is the latest dance step from Anjou."

"Well, you couldn't walk at all, a while ago. I think you're doing very nicely—from all I hear." She looked up and smiled, and a dimple wandered into her thin cheek. "I think you're wonderful. Just wonderful! I never heard of anyone who had endured so much and still rode to battle in the very front rank, chopping and slashing right and left—"

"Oh, that fiery steed of mine ran away with me—don't fool yourself." I felt warm and expansive inside. I was within a breath of giving her a real kiss, not the polite salute of a few days before. And then I glanced at the left sleeve of my brigandine, and my trailing foot. I was a pretty article to embrace a damsel. She had embraced *me*, it is true—and she a girl who was sparing of her caresses. And why? Because she felt sorry for me, and wanted to cheer me up so that I would feel better. She had bestowed her kisses on me like alms, bless her generous heart. If she hadn't loved me when I was strong and handsome—and I had good reason to know she hadn't—then whatever she felt for the maimed wreck of me wasn't love.

I owed her my wits and my life, such as they were. I had found myself not altogether useless now in battle. I could swing the Irish axe with good effect, as I had learned. So I ought to be grateful to her. And I was, of course.

I stood erect before her, on my left foot, my handless arm dangling at my side, and very humbly kissed her hand. She drew back from me with a little gasp, as if I had slapped her face, and ran from me through the arched doorway. . .

"I'm killing two birds with one stone," I told Eadmer. "I interview Abbot Aymon, and get news of his brother, the Mac Breagh, and also thank him for his hospitality on my other visit. Won't he be surprised?"

Eadmer smiled grimly, but did not argue. I thought this was odd, until I realized that he thought I was safe with him along. There were just the two of us. I recalled very little of our

nightmare flight from Killanore; the way seemed new to me, and very pleasant. The glens were full of deer, and the bogs were a-scream with birds. If I had had hawks and hounds, I could have enjoyed myself. The peasants gave us a wide room—the news of the Dublin business had spread like wine from a broken jug, and a man in Norman arms was a bogey for sure.

On a smothering hot day in late July, we came in sight of the Lake of Killanore, and the huddle of monastery buildings on its black western crags. Thunder growled around the edges of the high-piled white clouds, and the leaves drooped on the trees.

Eadmer and I watered our horses at a little rock-fed spring, high above the south shore of the lake. He squinted at the featherbed clouds. "Storm a-coming," he remarked. "We'd better get us a shelter."

"Since when are you afraid of a bit of wet? Ah—Madame Ceredwin has been getting after you about me, eh?"

"Well, your wits ain't what they was," he said unblushingly, "and she says you wasn't to get wet nor over-tired. It's a chore to wet-nurse you, balky as you be, but I don't complain." He bent over invitingly to get a drink. I couldn't kick him efficiently, so I shoved his head under the water.

I couldn't claim the hospitality of the guest house, of course. I wanted to see Brother Teague, and I was going to have my talk with Abbot Aymon, and then we would leave before we were thrown out. We took a good rest beside the spring, lying in the long grasses and looking out over the lake that seemed dark and sinister even under a blue sky. But in the west the clouds were heaping up thick and dark, with a spear of lightning flickering in and out.

WE got to the abbey just before the storm broke, and a sudden gale was whipping the dark waves of Killanore to froth. The porter directed us to the abbot's lodgings. We urged the dancing horses that way—Boru did not like lightning, and neither did Cormac—and stabled them beside a handsome cream-white mule with a vicious eye, and a fine bay palfrey. The lay brother forking manure stared at us, but made no protest—there was plenty of room. We hurried out and hammered at the door of the abbot's lodging.

Another lay brother admitted us, and stared at our dusty mantles, as I asked, in my best Erse, to have speech with the abbot. He showed us into a bare stone hall with a bench and a small fire in it, and a door opposite the entry.

"You will have to wait," he informed us. "The abbot is busy."

We sat down, and the door closed after him.

"Trusting soul, ain't he?" remarked Eadmer.

"Nothing here to steal, unless you want the bench. I'm going to have a look around." He started to get up, but I went on, " It's better for one to explore. I want to find you when I need you, and I know my way around an abbot's parlor better than you do. If I find anything interesting, I'll let you know."

He bulged his eyes at me, but subsided on the bench. "Well, be careful," he muttered, "and yell when you need me."

I grinned at him, and shoved gently against the inner door. It opened on well-oiled hinges. The abbot's camera lay within—a handsome chamber, done, it would seem, by someone fresh from Normandy. It had three arched windows on a side, that would give light to it, but the shutters had just been closed against the coming storm. On a great carven hearth at the far end of the room, a fire leaped and muttered, and illumined dimly a carved chair of dark oak, a piece of faded tapestry on the north wall, a small table covered with phials and apothecary's bottles, but no abbot.

I made out a doorway on either side of the stone hearth, hung with heavy crimson curtains that stirred unceasingly with the vagrant drafts. I heard excited voices. Then came a great peal of thunder, the curtains bellied out, and beyond the one on my left, I saw a small dark chamber, lit by a silver lamp that swung on a chain from the vault overhead and cast a wan light over the face of Aymon Mac Breagh. He sat at a small table, facing me, and opposite him another man, his back to me, was talking to him.

The abbot had grown leaner than ever, and his eyes glared green out of their darkened sockets. He wore a coarse dark robe, and a black skull-cap over his tonsure, and his complexion was waxy-yellow as a dead man's, and stretched tight over his great brow and cheek-bones. He looked like a sick man, and he was startlingly ugly; his lips pulled back viciously from his teeth as he spoke. I almost feared him; and I thought of the crypt of St. Ibar, where I had gone mad. But of course he might only be arguing about the price of vellum. I edged up to the curtain and listened. Outside the storm had broken in full fury; the shutters rattled, the lightning flickered through the cracks, the wind howled in the chimney like a banshee, and the roars of the thunder echoed and re-echoed from the crags.

"—excellently done. So, our very defeats may work for our good."

The abbot was speaking French! The other man growled something, and the abbot's smile tightened. "Let us not discuss it further. To what good? The siege is over. The holy Archbishop O'Toole made his best endeavor, and in vain. If I might have accomplished more, having fewer scruples when it comes to villainy

—well, I was disregarded. And the devil seems to favor his own." He sank back in his chair. His head drooped; a hand that was no more than yellow skin over bones caressed his shaven jaws. "Now, when you come before the king, speak to him in this fashion: say that Richard de Clare, having conquered the High King of Ireland, seeks to make himself ruler not only of Leinster, but of all Ireland. Speak of his cruelty, and his oppression of the natives, who groan for deliverance. Say, also that his plans are ambitious; that all Ireland is not large enough to chamber his great schemes.

"Let the king look to his crown, then; let him come overseas and crush this upstart and his henchmen, before they grow too strong to crush!"

His voice deepened and swelled in tone; his eyes glittered. Then he smiled gently. "And once he is here indeed—well, your wrongs may be righted sooner than you think, messire, for my brother the Mac Breagh waits for him, and he is a man of many devices."

A terrific peal of thunder made the lamp swing on its chain. I thought the stranger seemed to shrink in his chair. Aymon, unregarding, pushed several sealed parchments across the table. "These to the king—they explain matters more fully."

"You're going to tell him about Fitz-Stephen, surely?" The voice of the other man was thickly jocular, and familiar, too. "They took a leaf from your book there, your reverence, those Wexford lads—assuring him everybody else had been killed in Dublin, and promising him safe-conduct—swearing on holy relics, too! And then grabbing him when like a fool he came out unarmed. Just as that ass and bully St. Erne did. It was pretty, by God it was. They've got him bound up like a bundle there on Holy Island in Wexford harbor; he's more valuable as a hostage than St. Erne ever was, because

The abbot sat at a small table, talking to another man.

he's a Geraldine, even thought a left-handed one." He haw-hawed coarsely, and there was spite in the laughter.

Fitz-Stephen a prisoner. I went cold all over. But in the midst of my unpleasant surprise, I got a look at the abbot. He was crossing himself, and his face had gone even paler. Almost green he was, in fact. Perhaps the ghosts of Dun Cathach annoyed him; perhaps it was only a pain in the belly. But he spoke up harshly.

"I will not speak of that now. You must go, messire; the storm is bad, but fresh horses are waiting, and this business must not be delayed for weather. The saints will guard you to Wexford, and so will the Mac Breagh clan. And have no impatience over the recovery of your daughter. She is with Aoife, the daughter of Dermot, whom the devil torments even now in hell. Pay no heed to these tales you may have heard of that lecherous hound Fitz-Brian being alive; he died here in this monastery, a cripple and a lunatic, and dependent on the charity of Killanore." His eyes gleamed suddenly, and I thought of the crypt of St. Ibar. He went on, "The foreigners once gone from this land, she shall be married to the Mac Breagh, since you seem to doubt the legality of her first marriage in spite of my sworn word, in Christ Church in Dublin, with full ceremony."

HE rose, and the other man rose, too. He was a portly party. I knew him, even before he turned; it was de Morreise. He wasn't so fat as he had been before; running the abbot's errands must have taken off some tallow.

I felt a bit exposed; I slid back into the camera, and dodged behind the other crimson curtain, and found myself in a small but beautiful chapel. The rain beat heavily against its three windows of painted glass, dull in the gray light from outside, save when the lightning gashed them with red. The altar glimmered with gold encrustations, and tall candlesticks of gold stood upon it, bearing flickering tapers. The odor of incense was sweet and strong. The only trouble was that it afforded no sort of hiding place, and I had no weapons on me. With my head ringing with the treachery I had just listened too, I had no desire to get killed prematurely.

So, as the voices grew more distinct, I dodged behind the altar, muttering a prayer of apology.

But the voices suddenly died. I heard a door close, and hoped with fervor that Eadmer would behave himself. I was just about to emerge and go get him when I heard approaching steps, soft footsteps, and slow-moving. I dodged back and waited, and heard a long sigh.

The storm broke out again, in full cry, with rolling thunder and flashes of lightning that dazzled the eyes, and the rain lashed the windows. I could hear nothing but the row for several heartbeats. I waited, crouched behind the altar, and my back was giving me trouble. And all this suspense and cramp might be for nothing; whoever it was might have come and gone while I was tied into irreverent knots behind the altar. So I stood up quietly and looked.

Aymon Mac Breagh lay prostrate before the altar, the wavering candlelight gilding his bony hands that gripped each other and twisted about like writhing pale spiders. He was praying, and he prayed in Erse, and between the echoing peals of thunder and his prone position, I could make out very little. But he seemed in considerable distress. He moaned for something to release its gripe upon his entrails; then he groaned deeply, as from the very blackness of agony and utter despair. I could interpret that—I had groaned in that way myself, in this very monastery, down in the black crypt of St. Ibar.

"I was but the instrument of Thy just vengeance!" he gasped. "Spare me, then, until I have warded the blow from my country's heart! St. Ibar, *ora pro nobis!* I have prayed, I have fasted. Any irreverence done to thy sacred hand I did for the sake of Erin. Take thy hand from my vitals then, until the proud invader be dashed to bloody bits upon the shore!"

He rose upon his knees, then, his arms flung wide, his ghastly face, twisted with pain, lifted to the yellow light of the candles. I stared at him with revulsion; he was a sick man, he was half-mad, by the look of him, and death was in his eyes. It looked as if I would have to pass up any idea of doing personal justice on him.

A brilliant flash of lightning dazzled the chapel. Aymon leaped to his feet and stood staring and twitching. He had seen me.

He looked so horrible that my first instinct was to get out of there in a hurry; then I recalled that I couldn't run anyhow. So I stayed where I was, silent and no doubt extremely pale around the gills, behind the altar. When the moment of panic passed, I saw that, incredibly, he was frozen in his tracks with fear. His eyes rolled in his head, his mouth hung open. And I reflected that he thought I was dead.

I fixed my eyes upon him, and slowly lifted my handless arm; lifted it until it was on a level with his face, the mailed sleeve of the brigandine hanging limply from the stump.

"Liar and murderer—it is my hand you feel!" I said softly through the dying rumbles of the thunder. He shuddered and backed off blindly, as if his feet were under no control of his will. I took a step forward, my arm still raised.

"Defiler of holy relics—shame to God's holy church—do you feel my hand that twists your bowels?"

He had veered slightly. When he backed away again, he struck the wall of the chapel. I took another step toward him. My idea was to get to the door as soon as I could, and get going. He might come out of his trance of terror, and yell for help.

He did yell, then—he uttered a howl of desperation that fairly drowned the thunder, and ran around to the left side of the chapel. I started toward him. Two thoughts flashed through my mind, *"This is idiotic and improper,"* and, *"Milo would have loved a jape like this."*

Aymon's frightful eyes glared into mine. With his trembling claw of a hand he made a great sign of the cross. He gabbled at me, "To your grave, to your grave, accursed! I command it, in the name of God!"

LIGHTNING split the sky, a sudden gust of wind blew out the altar candles and black darkness followed, and a rolling of thunder. I heard him panting. I came forward again, and the next flash showed me to him.

What happened then I can scarcely describe, it happened too fast. With a yell, he leaped to the altar, oversetting candlesticks right and left. The next moment, crash! he had dived through the painted glass of the middle window. I heard a scream of mortal terror, the thunder rolled as if in answer, and then after a long moment I heard the dull hollow roar of water that receives, at great depth, a falling body.

I stood paralyzed, the rain beating through the broken window on my face.

The next moment, I was back in the anteroom, gibbering, and Eadmer was trying to make sense out of me.

"Good Lord above, I guess I've killed him!" I gulped. "He took a dive into the lake—"

"Stop blathering." Eadmer was wrapping my mantle around me. "Brother Teague will be here in a moment—I went out and hunted up a brother and sent for him. Sit down and get your breath."

When Brother Teague came puffing into the hall, I had got back enough breath to greet him. He welcomed me warmly, and Eadmer as well.

"The blessed saints be praised that I see ye walkin' about again, free and strong!" he exclaimed, shaking my hand. "It's the miracle ye are, Sir Brian!"

"It's all thanks to you, that saved me from death until my friends could get to me. And now you'll think ill of me. Brother Teague, I fear I've killed your abbot."

Those were the days, you know, after the whole world had been filled with horror when Fitz-Urse and the others dotted the Archbishop of Canterbury a few good ones over the head, and most men wouldn't have touched the clergy with tongs. I am not going to talk politics, but I say Becket asked for it, in the first place, by his high-nosed defiance of the king in defense of murderous clerics, and what's more, the king should have known better than to issue an invitation to slaughter, even in jest, to as bone-headed a lad as Fitz-Urse. But I am no assassin—I had intended to scare the daylights out of the abbot as soon as I saw he thought I was a ghost.

When I kill people I do it in a fair fight as a gentleman should.

The blood drained from Brother Teague's rosy face; he shrank back. Eadmer said hastily, "Don't worry—he's not crazy again. For God's love, my lord, tell your tale and don't worry Brother Teague."

I got hold of myself and told what had befallen. "He took me for my own ghost, I think," I ended, "and he dived out the window into the lake. I'm sorry, truly I am; not that I loved him, but because I wanted to learn a few things from him. He was up to his neck in plots. But—"

The little monk shook his head gravely, crossed himself and muttered a prayer. Then he said slowly. "He used ye cruel, yer honor, and none knows it better than I. Must I say it? In his mind and heart I fear his tribe came before his God. And it's the sick man he was, yet he never spared himself, and the dreadful pain eating his belly day and night. And he loved this land more than a man in the world loves wife and childer—for he would do murder for it, and swear false for it, and send himself back to the devil for it—God rest his poor soul now, I must get help and bring him out of the water."

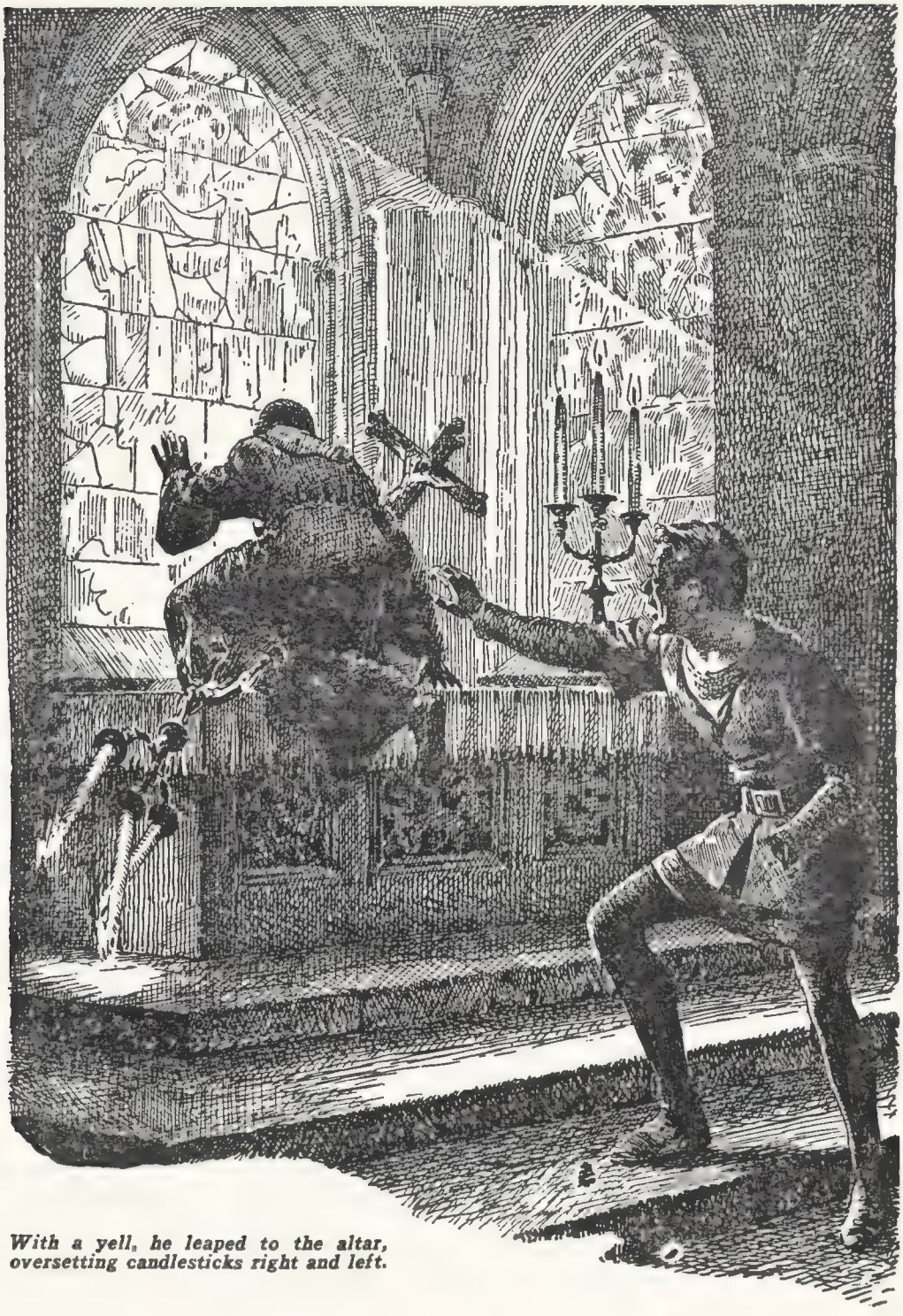
Well, the black waters of the Lake of Killanore seemed to have swallowed Aymon Mac Breagh.

In the end I had to strip and dive from a boat for the body, while the entire brotherhood clustered, weeping and praying in the wet, on the cliffs high above, where the rain drove through the broken window of the chapel, for none of them could swim. I found him at last and brought him up, and Eadmer hauled him into the boat. He was light to bear up, in spite of his dripping robes, for he was nothing but yellow skin stretched over bones underneath.

I have discussed his symptoms since with my surgeon, and I rather doubt if I hastened his death by more than a few weeks.

The brothers of Killanore would have given us entertainment, foreigners though we were, but I was frantic at the thought of de Morreise galloping on his way with those treacherous messages.

So Eadmer and I rode away in a wet and foggy dawn, so soon as it was light enough to see our way.



With a yell, he leaped to the altar, oversetting candlesticks right and left.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TREACHERY OF MAC BREAGH

I WAS sick at heart to learn of Fitz-Stephen's fate. As generous a soul as ever breathed, completely, without envy or spite, he had stripped himself of his good men so that he could help the earl; and the same foul double-dealings that had slain St. Erne had periled his life.

We rode hard and rested little until we got to Ferns, but we had no news of de Morreise. At Ferns we found Donall Cavanaugh in residence, and he was pleased to see me. He insisted on our resting there for a day. He had not seen anything of de Morreise or the Mac Breaghs, but the earl and a large troop of horse had passed through Ferns only the day before, riding to the aid of Fitz-Stephen.

"They will not find him." The chief shook his head. "For when news of the earl's coming reached Wexford, the Wexford men set the town afire and rowed away with their families and treasure to Holy Island, in the harbor. It is there that they hold Fitz-Stephen, and they will certainly cut off his head if they are attacked."

Well, that was pleasant news. I didn't sleep much that night, between worrying about Fitz-Stephen and wondering where the hell de Morreise could have got to so fast. Cavanaugh sent out men to watch the roads for us, but they had reported no strangers in sight. Eadmer and I caught up with the earl's party next noon, when they'd halted in a glen to eat, some miles beyond Dun Cathach. They were gloomy and discouraged. Poor Fitz-Stephen's castle of the Crag, that I had seen building, was level with the ground, they said, and Fitz-Stephen himself and his half-dozen men were prisoners of the men of Wexford, as Cavanaugh had reported.

"We're in a fix," Maurice Fitz-Gerald said grimly. "If we attack the damned treacherous bastards, off comes my brother's head. It ain't much of a head, poor old boy, but he'd not be the same without it. Some dirty trick they worked on St. Erne, wasn't it? Swearing on holy relics and all that—the swine!"

"Yes," I answered heavily, "but St. Erne's dead. Fitz-Stephen, please God, is still alive, and maybe the tide will turn sooner than we think. There was Dublin, after all. Where are you bound?"

"Waterford," he answered. "There might be word from England."

"Time, too. Have you seen anything of de Morreise?"

Fitz-Gerald spat delicately. "He got out of the country, I understand."

"He was in it two days ago," I said, and then I told him what I'd overheard at Killanore. He was interested. He took me to the earl's tent—Strongbow had a fine silk pavilion, lately the property of the High King Rory—and woke him out of a nap to tell him. Strongbow sat up, in his stained old leather jerkin, and rubbed his red head sleepily. Then, to my surprise, he smiled.

"Well, now," he said gently, "I thought there must be treachery working against us at court. King Henry didn't abandon us without what he thought was good cause. Only he's listened to the wrong story. De Morreise must have been trying hard to get back the King's favor and his property along with it. It's not such bad news, gentlemen."

"De Clare," marveled Fitz-Gerald, "you're a wonder."

"I must say that I think the abbot of Killanore ill-advised," the earl murmured. "To excite King Henry's curiosity about Ireland is a bad way to drive the foreigners out. I will have to speak to him."

Fitz-Gerald grinned. "Fitz-Brian here has already spoken to him; you won't have to bother." He repeated what I'd told him, with embellishments, and Strongbow stared admiringly at me until my ears burned.

"Your debt to him is paid—well-paid, Fitz-Brian," he said, nodding at my left arm. He had never pretended not to see it, as some did; neither had he gawked at it as others did. He simply was aware that I had a hand missing, and thought no more about it.

"Yes," I said, "and now I must settle with the Mac Breagh."

"For St. Erne—I know. Would you like to take some of my men?"

"Thank you, messire, no. I can use the lads from Dun Cathach."

"Be careful, then. I know a person who is much intrested in your welfare, and I should be sorry to see her grieve."

I fear I simpered. "I've been practicing with my Irish axe, messire. Nobody need worry."

WHEN Strongbow got to Waterford, he found Mountmaurice, and a message from King Henry, ordering him to come to England at once, and explain himself. A message that I would have thrown at the royal nose, but Strongbow obeyed at once, sailing back with Mountmaurice, who thought he had the king's ear at last, and could do Strongbow some good. Odd, isn't it, how kings favor rascals, and regard honest hard-fighting gentlemen with suspicion?

I collected a force of twenty men from Dun Cathach and went hunting. I passed through my own lands on the way and was royally feasted by the Mac Cloghan. The little chief had taken a fancy to me, somehow, and reproached me bitterly for helling all around the

landscape and neglecting my lands and castle. The Mac Breagh had raided in that direction six months before, and nothing was left of Pigsty but a puddle of mud and some charred timbers. Perilous they reported in the same state. I did not visit it then—I could not bear the sight of it, remembering that summer of sweating over the fortifications and making bright plans for the future. Today a small priory stands upon the site, and sometimes I go there.

When the Mac Cloghan heard of my hunting plans, he embraced me like a brother and begged to go along. I accepted his company gladly, and our twenty, along with two hundred kernes, the Mac Cloghan and seven of his assorted sons, went loping off to the westward.

We raided Ballinmish very thoroughly. We drove cattle and fired grain fields and beat down the opposition, who swarmed out like wasps to the fray. We came to the chief's rath at last, filled in the ditches and crossed them, swept through the stockade and left the wattle-and-daub castle blazing to the sky and its defenders dead in the flames. The only flaw in a satisfactory excursion was the absence of the Mac Breagh. Nobody seemed to know where he was; he had gone north, the betaghs told us, to the siege of Dublin, but had returned five days ago, and ridden off again immediately with a small, well-mounted party.

We collected enough loot to convince the Mac Cloghan that I would be a satisfactory suzerain, even for an Irish chief. With some difficulty, I managed to locate the house of hospitality where the Mac Breagh had encamped with his forces after the raid on Dun Cathach. The master of the place—the bruaire, they call him—was very conciliatory when he saw our numbers and cattle, and offered his assistance to me in anything I wanted.

I told him what I wanted. He paled visibly under his fine crop of bronze whiskers, and informed me that the place was haunted. I said we'd go in daylight, and never mind, but fetch me a new mantle of silk, which I paid for with two cows. We went to the bog's edge. The bog was white with flowers and noisy with birds, and the sky above us was as softly blue as if it had never vaulted that terrible night. I came to the place where I had fought the Mac Breagh, and the long grasses were lush and green, as if blood had never stained them. Then the bruaire pointed to a bare mound of earth close by, and nodded. . .

I wrapped Milo's bones in the silk mantle. It was he—the yellow hair still clung to the skull. The Irishmen shrank away from me, but I was not noticing them.

The Mac Cloghan and I parted with mutual expressions of regard in a misty dawn of early September, and I rode to Dun Cathach with my twenty and our share of the cattle. The castle had been prosperous that summer. The taxes had come in without too much trouble, the mill was turning busily, and Ebba and Evan Vawr were trying their hands at brewing ale for the winter.

They helped me all they could. We made two oaken coffins, and arranged the bones of St. Erne and Milo within, as decently as we could, and strewed them with river herbs that might have grown beside some silvery stream in Wales. And then we buried them in the new chapel, in front of the altar, side by side, while Father Denis prayed, and the men's sweet Welsh voices raised the hymn. Never stone was laid over two men more noble, more brave or more honored by everyone who knew them. God give them rest.

By this time the brown embroidered sleeve on my helm nearly flapped itself to rags, and I had wavered in my decision to be a monk. I had to stay at Dun Cathach for several days, recovering from my saddle-galls, delivering judgment to our subjects, seeing to repairs and to the thousand petty matters that the best of castellans prefers to load onto his overlord. So I snatched the chance to get some old women in the neighborhood to make me some decent clothes. The local wool was coarse, but the Irish do a pretty job of dyeing with herbs, and I got a blue gown and a pair of linen shirts that were not too bad. I intended to go to Dublin with them and pay my respects to Queen Aoife and other folks, who had last seen me in my dirty old leather shirt and torn hose. No wonder they had felt sorry for me as a forlorn object. I thought of growing a mustache like Fitz-Stephen's, but concluded to wait until I had some opinions on the matter.

I WAS still maimed, of course. The sleeves of my new gown I had made long and loose to hide my deficiency, a practice I still follow, lest I shock some stranger. Why, there was a tough old thegn hereabouts who came to one of my court days and turned so ghastly green when he saw no hand at the end of my sleeve that one of the servants heaved a bucket of water over him—but never mind that. I still limped badly, and had pains in my back enough to drive me wild after a long journey on horseback. I wore a very wide leather belt in the saddle, buckled tight to give me some ease. But I could—and truly, I am not bragging, ask anybody—swing the Irish battle-axe with as much skill and emphasis as old King Brian Boru ever did; and it is amazing what a little skill with a weapon can do to the desire to enter a monastery. I could fight pretty well now. I could defend my land and avenge a wrong and take a wife. I allowed myself to think of Ceredwin, of the two occasions on which she'd kissed me, and of the means I

would take to make her stop pitying me. I thought, perhaps she won't feel so sorry for me when she hears what I can do with an axe. I thought, one arm is enough to hold a slender girl like her with. I thought a number of things that made me grin foolishly, and I began anticipating how I would give her a proper kiss to make up for the chaste farewell I had taken of her.

When, a week before Michaelmas, I saw Art O'Gallin's long black hair flying after him as he rode up the slope to the castle, I thought to myself, I will send a message by him to Dublin, and tell her how I've changed my mind, and that I will come for her when the Mac Breagh is found and finished up. I hustled in and put on my new gown; although I was only the castellan of Dun Cathach, I felt pleased to welcome guests there.

O'Gallin had aged since Dermot's death; he had been devoted to the old king, like Morice Regan, and something seemed to have stopped in him. I asked the mess sergeant to get us something good for dinner, and Father Denis hobbled out to stir us up a salad.

I sat in my chair of presence, and looked over the hall with pride: the leaping fire, the men at the tables below the dais, reaching for their grub and growling contentedly over their ale, the sentries posted at the door, Ebba, Evan and Father Denis at the high table with Eadmer and me, as was proper. All we needed was a tapestry and a lady. I kept looking at O'Gallin, to see if he was admiring us enough. He disappointed me; he kept his eyes on his trencher.

"What's the latest from Dublin?" I asked, passing him the bread.

He eyed me and looked away. "O'Rourke, that's king of Meath, attacked de Cogan again, a week ago. He got beat."

"So, I should think. Have some ale, do . . . Tell me, frankly, how do you think I'd look with a mustache?"

"Sure, and ye'd look terrible." He flashed his old smile.

"That's what I've been a-telling of him." Eadmer condescended to be jovial with this particular Irishman. "A face like my lord's ain't improved with brushwood sprouting all over it. Hard on the girls, too."

O'Gallin didn't smile. He ate a few more mouthfuls off the joint, and then turned a stern face on me. "Tell me, Fitz-Brian," he said in a low tone, "have ye been near Dublin recently?"

"Me? No!" I was surprised. "Not since we raised the siege. We've been raiding Ballinmish and—what do you mean?"

His brows knit. "Ye had a signet ring." It was an accusation.

"Yes," I said. "It belonged to my grandfather. You've seen it on me. I lost it when I lost the hand I wore it on. I'm going to find it, one day, when I find the Mac Breagh. What of it?"

O'Gallin stopped eating and sat up suddenly. "My sorrow, but I did recognize it," he said. "Fitz-Brian, it is two weeks ago that I saw your ring. It was given to a lady in Dublin, with a message from ye that she minded, to come where ye waited for her. Ye say ye never sent it?"

"No," I said, and gripped his arm. "No."

"I did not like it," he said sternly. "Of course, ye have a reputation with the *cailins;* and ye sent an escort for her, instead of comin' for her yourself, and she thought ye were hurted—I thought, I will break me journey to Waterford here, and see if ye've treated her proper, she being a sweet little lady—" He stopped. "She come to me, she did, to ask if it was truly your ring—she was pleased that ye'd sent for her—Fitz-Brian, ye're breakin' off me arm!"

EADMER said sternly, "Don't be running off in all directions, like a damn' fool, and get yourself killed. That won't help my lady."

"He's got her," I said. We were breathing the horses in a little vale in Wicklow. A river flowed along through it, very peaceful, between reaped fields.

"For the love of St. Werburgh," his eyes bulged in alarm, "you ain't losin' your wits again, are you? Say something sensible!"

I looked at him. I was tired. We had come four leagues or more since dawn; Cormac's head drooped. I ran my tongue over my dry lips. "I've got to find her."

"He's had her by now—she's his wife."

"Shut your dirty mouth."

"All right, all right—you can always make her a widow."

I walked around aimlessly; I couldn't sit or stand still. Eadmer came after me, protesting; I didn't hear what he said. I wheeled on him.

"I have to find the Mac Breagh. De Morreise was plotting with Aymon—he was to lure the king to Ireland with his talk of de Clare's mismanagement and ambitions. Pity he got away. Maybe he's back by now. Pity he got away from us."

"Right, my lord. Why don't you come and sit down here, and—"

"Aymon said that de Morreise would get his wrongs righted, if King Henry could be induced to come to Ireland. What are they up to?"

Eadmer drew a soiled forefinger across his throat, walled his eyes and said "*K-kk-k!*"

"Assassinate a king, complete with his constable, seneschal, pages, squires, bastards, grooms of the chamber, horses, hawks and hounds?"

"Well, kings have had their throats cut before. It's no skin off my nose. He ain't used

us right, denying the reinforcements, and he's a damned Norman, anyhow."

"Angevin," I corrected him. "He's from Anjou, half-wit. And I'm Norman myself, so mind your manners."

"You're English, my lord," he said mulishly.

I let it pass; he thought he was paying me a compliment. "The thing to do," I said, " is to find the Mac Breagh. Now, he'll be wanting to meet the king, when the king comes, and I doubt if the king will need prodding. He'll land at Waterford—that's the most direct route from Bristol. So the Mac Breagh will be hanging around in those parts. I must kill him, first. De Morreise isn't the lad to stand up alone. So then we can find *her*."

I got back some of my wits, after a while. I could plan carefully the search for the Mac Breagh; send out small scouting parties, well-armed and well-mounted, from Dun Cathach, fanning the wild, lonely country-side, bog and forest and hill. I could make myself rest when I needed it, so that my back would stop giving me hell; take my meals, see to the horses, listen to the reports when they arrived, all with the useful top part of my mind, with the bars fastened tight on the sick misery penned up below. Sometimes the captive would clamor at me, "He's got her, he's got her—he'll be hating of her for flouting him—God knows what he's doing to her at this moment—Ceredwin, Ceredwin—" Then I would try to shut myself up again, saying, "I'm doing all I can, and she's no fool, as I have reason to know. Maybe she can escape from him—maybe she—"

It was all pretty bad. It made the dark memories of St. Ibar's crypt seem almost easy. There at least I had only myself to worry about. Why, why couldn't she have stayed in Dublin's safety, as I'd asked her to? Why hadn't she wit enough to know that I'd have better manners than to send for her with a signet ring, like an Italian sending for his doxy?

I went on looking. The men helped me. They had liked my little lady. They told tall tales about her gallant wanderings in search of me, in those days when I lay in darkness, her saving of my life and reason in the grave on Inchna-Droa. But their tallest tales could not exaggerate her loveliness, her courage, her gay heart, her steady loyalty. I had seen her change from a shy convent child to dazzling womanhood without losing for a moment these qualities. And I was lonely for her, with such loneliness as I had never felt before, not since Milo was taken from me. She was my comrade too, and I wanted her so. I cried her name to the rocky hillslopes, to the hernes rising from the bogs, and when Eadmer tapped his forehead, I went on calling to her.

It was in this fashion that we hunted through Desmond for the Mac Breagh and his bride, and did not find them.

KING HENRY landed at Waterford on St. Luke's day, the 18th of October with a considerable force, five hundred knights, four thousand men-at-arms and two thousand archers—and blood in his eye. The chiefs of Desmond and Thomond, dazzled by this spectacle, hustled to submit themselves to him as his very loyal subjects—with their fingers crossed, as usual—and the Wexford polecats came bustling to him with poor Fitz-Stephen, their prisoner, in chains—in chains, mind you! telling many tales of his oppressions, and making a smug-faced request that the king punish the man who had invaded Ireland without a permit. And King Henry thrust him into Reginald's Tower, the Waterford stronghold, still in chains.

When I heard that—I was beating the brushwood on the lower Nore, where one of the men had seen yellow shirts the day before—I took time out to swear.

"Damn his soul," I said, "I don't go in my best blue gown to do homage to anyone like that. Fitz-Stephen! Fitz-Stephen, as gallant a lad as ever breathed—in chains! The back of my hand and the sole of my foot to you, messire king, as the Irish say."

"Now then," Eadmer propped himself on his boar spear, "you listen to me, my lord. It's a shame, sure it is. But what are you trying to do, get us into trouble, and lose all you've got? And your poor old uncle—back there at Pen Mynydd, married for the fourth time and working hard to get himself an heir to the barony—you'll bring him under suspicion, and the king might help himself to the estates. To say nothing of sticking your own fool head in the noose. We'll go down to Waterford, and do your homage, and we might hear something there. After all, if Fatty de Morreise wants to take a poke at the king, he'll have to go where the king is."

In spite of my anger, I listened. Rebelling against a king has a way of spreading itself out, like ripples when you chunk a stone in the mill-pond, and many an innocent reed or floating helpless log gets pounded all undeserving. As Eadmer had suggested, my uncle had troubles of his own, and it would hardly be fair to wind him up in mine.

So, cursing the interference, but hoping for some news of those I sought, I collected my party and went back to Dun Cathach. There I selected twelve of the biggest men we had, to impress the king with, and a tremendous shining up of helm and oiling of harness and currying of horses followed, and the grindstone in the bailey whined all day. I packed up my new gown and a shirt in a bundle, and we set out the next day for Waterford.

It was a pleasant autumn day, with scuds of white cloud driving before a brisk wind across

the deep blue sky, and the colored leaves dancing through the hollow glens, and the distant hills hazy as dreams. With one side of my mind, I observed the landscape for yellow shirts, issued orders to scatter or close, as I thought well, and listened to the old Welsh air of "The Snow-white Steed" that Evan and some of the others were intoning. But the other part of my mind ranged far afield, thinking of St. Erne and Milo, of Fitz-Stephen and Earl Richard; how greatly they had dared, how much they had suffered, the living and the dead—and it began to look as if it had all been for nothing. In the windy glens I thought I heard voices crying to me, and the wailing of the stripped trees seemed inexpressibly sad.

"Oh, Ceredwin!" I muttered once. "Where are you, Ceredwin? If I could find you, I think I could endure anything, and without you the glory of the world is done."

Have I ever mentioned the loneliness of the Irish countryside? You can ride for hours, and never see a soul, only the wastes of bog and forest; so that if you encounter a boy driving pigs or a shepherd girl, with her flock ambling along blatting and shaking their tails, you stop and stare as if they were the Archbishop of Canterbury and party. Now and again a deer will leap across the trail before you, or a rabbit bounce off into the dry leaves with a racket like the sky falling.

This loneliness is no doubt the reason why Evan Vawr and Meredydd, making modestly for the brush when we halted at noon, heard the faint cry to the westward. The wind had died, and Evan's ears, as he admitted afterwards, went straight up like a horse's, because, faint as the cry was, there was horror in it.

They came back on the double.

"It is nothing, it may be," said Evan, doubtfully.

"We'll have a look," I said, getting to my feet. "No rushing, now. We come up on 'em, and look 'em over first, mind."

We mounted and rode down the hill slope toward the blue waters of Bannow Bay, that lay westward of us—the Bannow, where Fitz-Stephen had first camped, when we were all young and eager, and St. Erne and Milo and old King Dermot were still alive.

A screeching and a fluttering in a low tangle of brambles distracted my melancholy thoughts. I rode over and looked—it was a young hawk, half-manned, and all snarled up in her creance. She lay on her back with her claws up, fighting the tangles blindly, and snapping her beak. I picked her up with extreme care, but could not untangle her with one hand, so Eadmer pulled out his knife and cut the leathers, and got his fingers bit good and hard.

"Where are you from, pretty?" I asked, and the hawk clawed fiercely. The bells on her heels were gold, pure gold, so soft you could dent it with your nail. "Come along," I said, "if this hawk doesn't mean that some of the king's men are hunting in this direction, I'll eat her, bells and all." I tossed her into the air, and we resumed our road, while the hawk spiraled up and up into the blue. We descended a wooded slope, and the trail twisted abruptly toward the Bannow.

Beyond the woods we could hear voices in the noon stillness—Erse voices, sharp with excitement. We reined in.

"Into the forest!" someone said. "Here we can tie him to a tree, and it will not take long."

"Are you being as wise as you think you are?" sneered another voice, Erse also, but with a heavy French flavor. "Blinded, what good is he for our purpose?"

"You waver, do you?" The other voice rang sharp and harsh. "Turn your back then, and be quiet, lest I tie your jaws too!"

"You bastards! Father'll have you skinned!" shrilled a third voice; a boy's voice, breathy with terror.

They came in sight then, through the trees—a great Irishman, his long black hair and beard flowing over rusty chain mail; a shorter, stout party also in mail, and between them, a boy of eleven or twelve, daintily dressed in leek-green and leather, fair-haired, scrawny, wriggling and twisting in their grasp, lashing out with his spurred heels, trying to butt them with his head.

"I'll use the buckle from your mantle—the point of the clasp is sharp enough," said the tall Irishman. "Screech, you devil's spawn, if you will; nobody hears you. We'll have your eyes on your cheeks in the space of a heartbeat!"

The boy heaved and jerked. "To me!" he shrieked to the clouded sky, the same shrill terror in his cry that had aroused Evan and Meredydd. "To me! Help! Help me! The bastards are going to blind me, and I can't whop 'em both!"

"No more you can't," I roared, rising in my stirrups anl leveling my boar spear, "but we can! Pigsty aboo!"

The two men were de Morreise and the Mac Breagh. Through the trees, I could see the yellow shirts of the kernes flitting like autumn leaves. My men took up the shout, and we charged down upon our enemies.

CHAPTER XV

THE KING'S FAVOR

WHEN mounted men charge men on foot, and that unexpectedly, the men on foot naturally pick up their heels and scamper. I would myself. The Mac Breagh and his fat friend dropped the boy and headed for the tall grass.

This was my hour. I let the boys do their will, and I headed after the Mac Breagh, my spear point right in his tail. De Morreise I could pass up, for the present. I heard shouts behind me, but I kept right after the tall figure dodging and ducking among the trees. I had not so much advantage as you might think—I had to mind the horse and watch where I was going, so I wouldn't get brained by an overhanging limb. And the Mac Breagh could run—run like an Irishman, and they are the fleetest-footed human beings I know. His rusty mail—*my* mail—flapped around his bare shanks and he put his head down and galloped. He worked around south and west, through the thick trees and brambles, and I after him. I thought of ambushes, too, but I was too desperate anxious to get him to be careful.

Suddenly he wheeled, and shouted. I saw his face, pale above the black beard, twisted with hate, and green eys gleaming. Abruptly Cormac reared back on his haunches, snorting, and I rode up well over his ears. I swore, and raked him with my spurs; he whinnied and shook his head, and remained sitting. I figured that Cormac and Boru had been trained to halt on that signal, and no doubt that was one reason why I had been presented with them. The Mac Breagh shouted again, at me this time, and dodged out of sight behind a holly thicket. I leaped off, dropping my spear and unlimbering my axe.

I'd forgotten I could only dot and go one, and my first plunge forward nearly stood me on my head. I swore and swore, and hobbledy-hopped after the Mac Breagh as fast as I could.

I knew it was hopeless. I couldn't run—it was as if I had a chain on my leg. After all these months, with my enemy fairly in my grasp! I breezed right through the holly thicket, to save time, and never even felt it. The trees thinned out on the southwestern slope, and I could see the Mac Breagh darting down that way, waving his arms. One of them had an axe in it. He was wearing my hauberk, all right, and, as Ceredwin had said, he'd fair ruined it. It was all rusted, and the links were broken in places, so that the tail hung in tatters like a beggar's rags—my good Valencia hauberk, that I wouldn't wear even in a heavy dew for fear of damage! I yearned to spill his gore.

I heard hoofbeats behind me, and Evan's voice, inquiring where I was.

"This way!" I bawled. "Lend me your horse, Evan—my damned beast responds to their signals, and he's balked on me! Hustle, or the Mac Breagh will get away!"

He was down from the saddle and I was up in no time at all.

"We have scattered them," he reported. "The boy is making a great noise. Will he be one of the king's party?"

"I suppose so—that must have been his hawk we found; might be one of the royal bastards." I set spurs to Evan's big gray and tore off down the slope after Mac Breagh.

As I reached the thickets at the foot of the hill, I caught a flash of yellow shirt, but I urged the gray on. The Mac Breagh was flitting among the trees, some distance away.

Suddenly two kernes darted out at me from the brushwood, howling. They had axes. The gray reared high on his hind legs, and one of the kernes rushed at him. I heard a sudden chop, as of a butcher's cleaver, and then the dull *clonk* of steel on bone. The horse screamed horribly; the other kerne made a rush at me, and I dotted him one with my axe—he dropped, just at the moment that the horse dropped, collapsing slowly with an agonized neigh. I jumped free, and used the axe again, this time to put him out of his misery. He quivered and lay still, his bowels on the ground and his head on the stomach of the kerne who had slain him, and whose skull had been crushed by his hoof. Here I was, afoot again, and Evan was not going to like this at all.

I plunged forward again. The Mac Breagh had halted to watch the kernes gut my horse, and he was staring at me from behind a tree trunk. I waved my axe at him.

"Come back here, you swine!" I invited. "Come back and fight! What are you afraid of? Thanks to your brother the abbot, I've got only one hand and about a leg and a half, and what's more, you've got my good hauberk! You can whip me easy this time, without calling in your whole tribe to help!"

He showed his teeth at me and was gone. I cursed, and hobbled after him. Across a break in the woods, some distance away, I saw a pack of yellow shirts, running hard and yelling, and one of my men after them. I longed for a horse, and then I heard, as if in answer, once again the thudding of quick hooves behind me, coming down the slope.

"This way!" I yelled. "This way!"

It was the boy we had rescued, straddle of a magnificent roan horse. He galloped up to me and reined the beast in. "I say," he shouted, "have you seen my hawk, fellow? I heard you had her—remember, it's death to steal a hawk, and—"

"Let's have your horse, if you please," I said, grabbing the reins. "I have to go see a man. Come on down from there."

He tried to jerk the reins from me; his blue eyes flashed sparks, and his foot caught me in the belly. "Let go my reins, you bastard!" he shrilled. "Father'll have you skinned, you dirty Irish thief!"

"Well, well," I grabbed him around the middle and peeled him out of the saddle like a plaster, "you must be of royal blood, messire—you show a truly royal gratitude. Bastard

yourself, by the way." I hove him off onto a soft bank of ferns, and scrambled up into the saddle, upside down and cross ways, and was on my way again.

THE Mac Breagh came in sight again as I made the clearing. He looked back and saw me, and put some speed into it, running for dear life to the west, where the trees climbed a rise of rocky ground and thinned out. I thought I saw a mounted figure, beyond his running form, but was not sure. I kept after him. The roan was a splendid horse, and what's more he didn't understand Erse, and wouldn't stop for any Erse signal. I was pretty sore at Cormac's defection, after I'd been fond of him and curried him myself and seen to his feed.

I plunged into the patch of wood beyond the clearing, tore through it, and found myself face to face with the Mac Breagh. He had halted at last, and was fronting me squarely. He was panting and gulping, for breath; he had taken on weight, I had noticed. He was ghastly pale, too, and shaking. But I was giving no heed to that. In front of him, and held there tight by his arm laid over her shoulder and across her breast, stood a woman; her lower jaw tied up tight in a gag, her blue eyes wild with fury, and her amber hair tumbling into her eyes.

Horns sounded somewhere in the forest; I could hear faraway shouts.

"Come no nearer, Mac Brian," gasped the Mac Breagh. "Whether you be man or devil fresh from hell, if you come nearer, it's this dagger that I'll be planting in her heart!" He raised it in his unoccupied hand. I knew it; it had once been mine. I had given it to Ceredwin at Dun Cathach.

Well, that set me back. He would do it, too—he was that sort of savage.

"Why don't you quit hiding behind a skirt, and come out and fight?" I addressed him, shifting my eyes around for possible company. I saw no one—but surely I had seen a mounted man among the trees. The horse she had been riding, evidently, was pulling at the bark of a tree some distance off.

"Stay where you are, dark foreigner!" roared the Mac Breagh. "You dare not touch me; I am vassal to the English king! Ha! So he believes—does he think breath makes a vassal?"

"No, it takes honor and decency, but you wouldn't know about that," I taunted, reining in the restless roan. Ceredwin was wriggling and twisting and stamping on his feet. Her eyes sought mine. Suddenly, before I could call encouragement to her, those eyes widened; she threw back her head and made a kind of strangled noise through the gag.

Before I could turn in the saddle, the roan uttered a snort of rage and pain, and put down his head and kicked out behind; only my sudden clamping of my knees around his barrel kept me in the saddle. I heard a sound like *"Oof!"* and a thud. I swung around and saw Robert de Morreise lying on the ground, some distance off, a long-bladed hunting dagger in his hand and his belly rounding up to the sky. He was out cold. He must have tried to knife me in the back; the knife must have slipped and gashed the roan, and the roan responded promptly.

"Mm—mm—!" said Ceredwin desperately.

"He ain't dead," I snorted, and dismounted before the roan could dance forward any farther. I hoisted my axe, and let it fall again. What could I do? He would kill her. He began to back away, still holding her before him in that terrible grip. She was kicking out, with both feet off the ground, trying to break away, trying to give me my chance at my enemy.

I advanced cautiously after them. I wondered where the men were—if they had run into an ambush. I made comments, in my best Erse, and at some length, about Irish rats who used ladies for their shields—their ancestry, habits, and future destinations. His face reddened above the beard; he shouted at me.

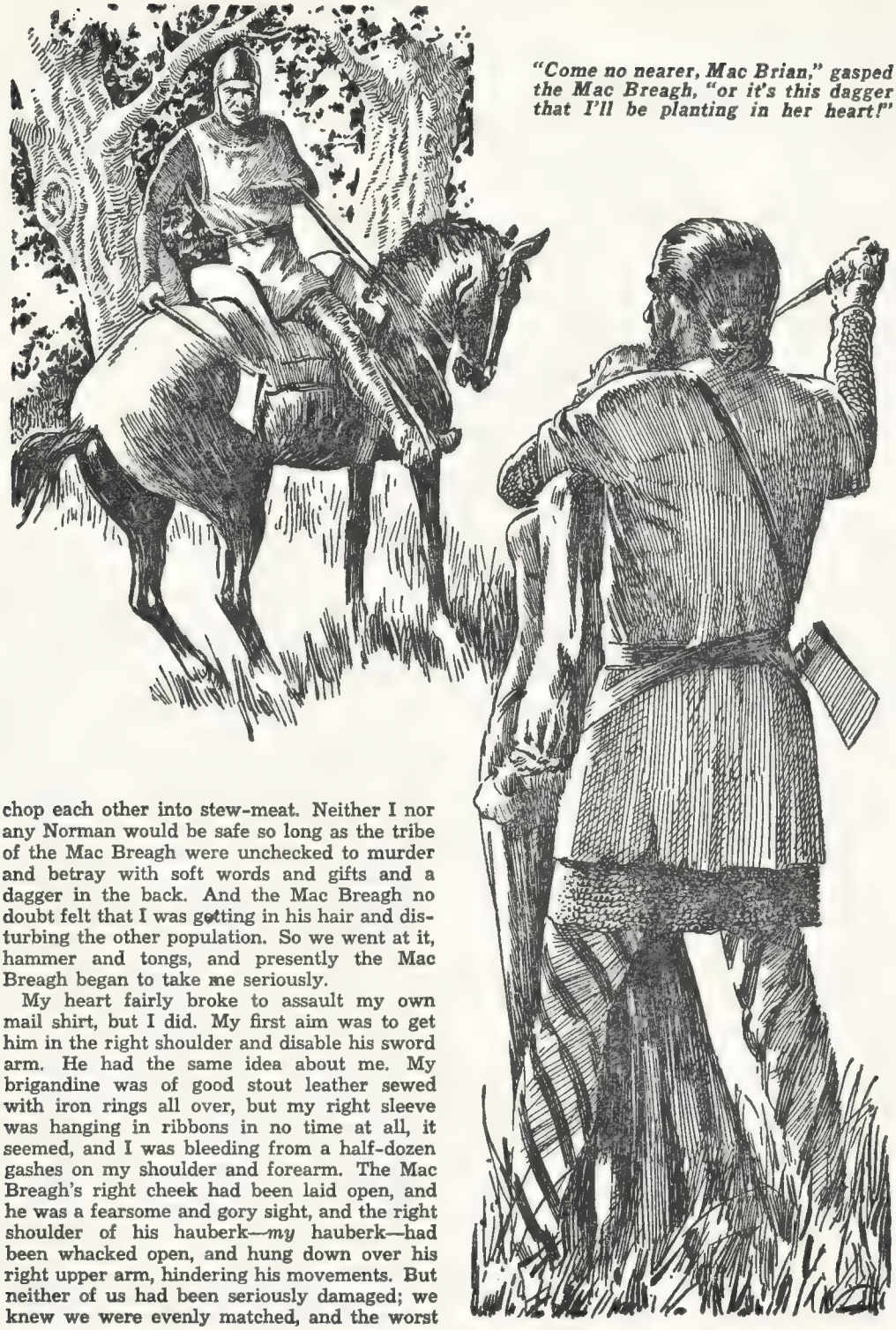
"Fool! You are a dead man! My men surround you, and my holy brother is not here to save you now!" he howled. "For days we have watched you hunting for your leman; we have laughed at you—we could have touched you! We waited for this—the moment when all Erin shall see me split your skull!"

He suddenly flung Ceredwin from him, with all his strength; she landed hard on the sod, the breath knocked from her. Before I could bellow at her to mount the roan and escape, the Mac Breagh had raised his own axe, and was upon me with a howl of exultation, that had nothing human in it.

I upped with my axe and parried his furious blow with another that struck his axe, and must have numbed his arm to the shoulder, for it numbed mine. At last I was at grips with the man who had murdered my friends.

Now I began to receive the reward of the long hours I had spent that spring, practicing the use of the Irish battle-axe against quarter-staves, swords, and our own Norman axe, with whoever would practice with me. I had worked with fervor, knowing that unless I could learn to manage the Irish axe, I would be crippled indeed. For the Irish axe is not a ponderous two-handed affair like ours; it is long-handled, but light weight, sharper than a razor, and you operate it with one hand, your forefinger laid along the haft to steer it by. It needs no stringing, no unsheathing; you up with it and let 'em have it. The Irish took a hand from me, but laid a weapon in the other, and I have tried to make the most of it.

Our aim, the Mac Breagh's and mine, was to



"Come no nearer, Mac Brian," gasped the Mac Breagh, "or it's this dagger that I'll be planting in her heart!"

chop each other into stew-meat. Neither I nor any Norman would be safe so long as the tribe of the Mac Breagh were unchecked to murder and betray with soft words and gifts and a dagger in the back. And the Mac Breagh no doubt felt that I was getting in his hair and disturbing the other population. So we went at it, hammer and tongs, and presently the Mac Breagh began to take me seriously.

My heart fairly broke to assault my own mail shirt, but I did. My first aim was to get him in the right shoulder and disable his sword arm. He had the same idea about me. My brigandine was of good stout leather sewed with iron rings all over, but my right sleeve was hanging in ribbons in no time at all, it seemed, and I was bleeding from a half-dozen gashes on my shoulder and forearm. The Mac Breagh's right cheek had been laid open, and he was a fearsome and gory sight, and the right shoulder of his hauberk—*my* hauberk—had been whacked open, and hung down over his right upper arm, hindering his movements. But neither of us had been seriously damaged; we knew we were evenly matched, and the worst was yet to come.

WE EDGED around each other in a circle, ducking and dodging, while our two right arms darted at each other like striking serpents. Blood spattered the coarse grass. I prayed that Ceredwin had used her head and saved herself. Early in the course of the fight I had caught the flutter of a garment, and I had a moment of wondering whether she would try to join in the fight and get herself brained. I wondered if her papa was feeling better, and what he was up to—no good, probably.

A sudden veer to the right on the part of Mac Breagh made me wheel on my good leg to go after him. In the clap of an eye I saw six of my men standing in an open-mouthed line, holding their horses. In front of them, de Morreise still lay stretched on the sod, wriggling feebly, and on his stomach sat his daughter, the gag still in her mouth, her hands braced hard and tight against his chest, her eyes on me.

The Mac Breagh feinted at my head, and then struck at my belly, hard. I gasped with pain, and felt something tumble to my feet. It wasn't my essential inwards, though—it was my wide leather belt, gashed through. A rush of blood followed, wetting my feet. I lost my temper, in spite of all prudent self-arguings, and aimed at his head blindly. The axe glanced off his steel cap, and sliced off his left ear.

With a horrible cry of fury and pain, he turned his back and started running for the trees!

"Stop him!" I gasped. "I—I can't run!"

The red and yellow of the autumn leaves whirled around and around before my eyes. I dragged myself a few steps toward the woods, and then halted suddenly. A large party of horsemen was galloping toward us out of the west, and the sudden sun flamed on mail and bright helms. The Mac Breagh's flying feet slowed, hesitated. I went after him. My wind was nearly gone, and I had my bad leg to drag besides. I staggered, caught my foot in the long grass and went down on one knee. As I fell, I saw the exultation in the savage eyes of the Mac Breagh and he wheeled and sped toward me.

Suddenly arms were around me, hoisting me to my feet. On my right was Eadmer, gray-faced, bulging-eyed; on my left was the lad I'd unhorsed, his eyes blazing blue, shaking all over.

"Thanks," I gasped, and the next moment, my axe rang against the quick-falling blade of the Mac Breagh's. Out of my deepest insides I seemed to feel a fresh strength come bubbling, like a spring suddenly cleared of leaves and trash. And the fight went on.

I heard voices bawling somewhere, and was aware of a considerable crowd gathering. I caught flashes of bright mail and yellow shirts, and the short crimson cloak of a chieftain. But I gave them no more heed than I bestowed on the crying birds and the bright autumn leaves. I knew that my men would do all they could to keep the yellow shirts from ganging up on me, and I could only pray there weren't too many of them to be handled in a hurry. The Mac Breagh aimed a vicious bad-tempered swipe at me; I dodged it, and worked myself around to his right; the sun was beginning to sink, and it bothered me.

He was getting winded. His face, where it wasn't bloody or bewhiskered, was pale and curiously mottled; his eyes stared blindly. Again he struck for my head; again I dodged, and he swung clear around, and staggered, ready to fall. And then, to my surprise, he broke into a stumbling run, straight toward the party of mailed hunters who had joined the congregation. He dropped heavily to his knees before one of them—a middle-aged, thick-set, bow-legged party in a beautiful suit of mail and a crimson satin surcoat. Beside him stood the boy whose horse I'd borrowed; the man had his long right arm tight around the boy's shoulder.

I hobbled up to see what the fuss was. The Mac Breagh, still on his knees, was gabbling away in Erse at a great rate, gasping between the words. The man in the crimson surcoat turned to a man at his left—a yellow-haired Irish youth in a chief's short cochal of green silk, over a fancy green gown of Norman fashion. I recognized him—his name was O'Hennessy, or something.

"What's he saying?" demanded the man in the crimson surcoat. He had an odd husky voice.

O'Hennessy preened himself, and interpreted. "The Mac Breagh says that himself is one of your honor's loyal vassals; he says that the boy he's fightin' of murdered his young brother in cold blood, and stole his wife—and it's justice he wants on 'im."

Apparently, the Mac Breagh hadn't heard of the death of the abbot, or he would have lugged that in, too. I leaned on my axe, trying to get my breath back, and marveling. Could it be that the Mac Breagh was tired of the fight? He had given me the battle of my life; I was all but done, and only the memory of St. Erne kept me from a sneaking admiration of his skill and strength. But why stop now? Why whine for justice? I stared at the man in the crimson surcoat, who stared back at me with an eye colder than any northern ice. Exhausted as I was, it made me bristle. These men were my countrymen—they should know the truth.

"Let me tell you one," I said. "This man and his tribe besieged Edmund de St. Erne in his castle of Dun Cathach. When they saw no way of conquering him in fair fight, they resorted to stratagem. He and his brother, the Abbot

His teeth snapped like a cornered wolf's in the bloodied tangle of his beard—and with a screech of rage, he bore down on me with his axe.

of Killanore, took their oaths on holy relics that all the Normans in Ireland had been butchered, and that if he surrendered, he should have safe conduct to Wexford for himself and his men. Then he butchered them when they came out unarmed. Strategy's strategy, but that was plain lack of decency, to my mind. With the aid of another dirty dog, Robert de Morreise, this Mac Breagh family contrived to turn the king of England against Richard de Clare, so that we Normans, who thought we were doing the king's will in Ireland, came within a whisker of being starved out or slain, because we could get no supplies nor reinforcements. Now they've succeeded in

luring the king to Ireland, where they plan to assassinate him. If you are of the king's party, as I suppose you are, you ought to warn him. Maybe you think a pack of savages would be of no force, but treachery knows its way around, and it has already smitten better men than the king. Personally, I don't care much. It's no skin off my nose what happens to a king who takes a traitor's word without investigating it; who chains up brave men on complaint of a bunch of fawning liars, and lets his loyal subjects starve to death because he's taken an unreasoning jealousy of their leader. But in all decency, lads like the Mac Breagh here ought to be taught a lesson, and—"

"I'll see to that," said the man in the red surcoat, his face nearly as red as the satin. "Finish the fight; let's see what manner of lesson you teach."

The boy at his side uttered a shrill yelp and began to dance up and down. The circle of armed men and Irish yellow shirts moved closer in, their eyes gleaming. The Mac Breagh rose, and turned to face me. His teeth snapped like a cornered wolf's in the bloodied tangle of his beard. With a screech of rage, he bore down on me with his axe. I dodged it, barely; he was slow recovering his balance. I swung up my axe and brought it down square on the top of his head. The blade cleft through steel and skull, and he dropped like a stone, and lay twitching in the bloody grass at my feet.

THE RING of Irish and Normans set up a great racket and bawling, and then as one man, surged forward. In a breath I was swallowed up by men shaking my hand, pounding my back, kissing me, congratulating me. I grinned and nodded; I was dizzy and sick and breathless from my oration, and the blood was pouring from a dozen deep gashes on my chest and shoulders. My brigandine hung in bloody rags.

Suddenly the crowd fell back. Before me stood the bow-legged man in the crimson surcoat. "Good work," he said. "Sir Brian Fitz-Brian, I have to thank you for Richard's eyesight. God bless you."

I blinked at him stupidly. He came close, and spoke to me alone.

"The king's not exactly a fool, you know. It's necessary to play politics with these Irish gentry, but Fitz-Stephen knows that his chains are lightly fastened, and he and his brother are to rule all of Desmond. De Clare is lord of Leinster, and his possessions in Normandy and England have been restored to him. You are right—I should have investigated what I was told by de Morreise. I have investigated now, and I will try to do justice as it lies in my power. But rest easy—I was not lured to Ireland by any traitor's tale. I came because I was interested in what was going on. I am still interested. I have seen a subject of mine, though handicapped by old wounds, turn his enemy's weapon to such good use as has amazed me. What can I do for you, Fitz-Brian?"

I got down on one knee, awkwardly enough, my face hot as fire.

"I spoke pretty plain," I muttered. "Messire, I—beg your pardon."

King Henry stretched out a large hand; I wiped the blood off mine on the skirt of my brigandine, and kissed his seal ring.

"Say what you want; I want to finish my hunting."

"I'd like to get my hauberk back, what's left of it," I said, "and the Mac Breagh's wearing a silver cross around his neck that he stole from St. Erne. I want that for St. Erne's son."

"And for yourself, then?"

"I—" I recalled something. "I want to marry this man's widow, messire. She's the daughter of de Morreise, but I'll take oath she's no traitor. I ask for your permission, as your vassal, to marry her."

"And if I don't grant it, you'll take her anyhow, as you helped yourself to Richard's horse?"

"Yes, messire."

"You Irish settlers are independent, by God's legs you are! Well, have her, then—you won't get to ask her father's leave, for the last I saw of him, he was legging it for the hills, and I fear we were all too interested in the fight to do much about it . . . And this is the lady?"

Ceredwin stood beside me, straight and slight and beautiful, a red mark across her face where the gag had cut, her clothes disordered, her hair loosened from its braids. She made a graceful and stately reverence to King Henry, whose eye lighted with interest—then she turned to me.

If ever, through the prayers of the just, I arrive in Paradise, I think I will see that look of hers upon the faces of the blessed. The look of joy that is half unbelief—the unbelief that slowly brightens into glorious certainty. She laid her two hands upon my bloody shoulders, and lifted her face. The axe fell from my hand into the trampled grass.

"Brian," she said. "Brian."

I flung my arms around her—both arms. I clasped her to me hard and tight, and dropped my sweaty forehead on her hair.

"You damned little fool," I said, "why didn't you stay in Dublin as I told you?"

"Well, they brought me your seal ring, and I thought you'd got yourself into another mess," she said. "I've missed a fine wedding in Christ Church—Papa had your ring—he was holding off the wedding until after the king had been killed."

"Well, I've spoiled your bridegroom, rather," I said. "But you can have me instead. Tell me

frankly, darling—would you like me in a moustache?"

"It will probably be red," she answered resignedly. "But try it. We can always shave it off."

She lifted her red lips to mine.

The audience cheered, the Irish shouts ringing above the rest; they were local lads, of course; the Mac Breagh clan seemed to have scattered. Prince Richard came trotting up importantly with St. Erne's silver cross in a gory hand.

"Here," he said.

"Thank you, messire." I took it from him. "I'm sorry I had to be in such a hurry to mount your horse. He's pretty good, that roan."

"He's a real Barb," he confided, looking pleased. Then he drew himself up. "Thank you, Sir Brian, for saving my eyes. They overpowered me when I went to find my hawk; they were going to use me for a hostage to draw my father into danger."

"I suspected as much . . . Did you find your hawk?"

The king interrupted. "If you take full responsibility for this woman, Sir Brian," he said solemnly, "you have my permission to marry the Lady Ceredwin de Morreise, and to be in charge of the possessions of her father that the king's court has confiscated."

"Thank you, messire," I said. "I promise to take full responsibility for her."

"You don't know what you're saying," he said, and I think he winked.

TODAY, the eve of Palm Sunday, I walked as far as the river.

My household has a custom of going down to the river on the eve of Palm Sunday and gathering fresh reeds to stew on the floor of the hall. They bundle out the winter's dirty hay, all stirred in with bones and hawk-droppings and the like, and burn it in the paddock and dance around it. Then everybody goes off to the river, old and young, and we have a modest Lenten feast afterwards. Some of the young folk come back from the jaunt mussed and giggly, and my chaplain tut-tuts a bit, but we all enjoy it, and I wasn't going to miss it this year, leg or no leg. I had been limping around a bit when nobody was looking, so I thought I would join the party.

In the warmth of the spring sunshine the yellow willows waved beside the river under a windy blue sky, and the shouts of the reed-gatherers were blown away as I came nearer, moving cautiously, leaning on my boar-spear in case I had trouble. I didn't, though. My leg's pretty well.

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My heart filled . . . I called to her and she came running to me, light-footed and beautiful.

I have lived so much in the past, these weeks in bed, writing this memoir, that the present world seems strange and dream-like and unreal to me. It hardly seems possible that I am a middle-aged man now, as gray as a badger and bothered occasionally by the rheumatics—although, as you have seen, I can still manage to enter tourneys and get spilled. I could tell much more, of how de Morreise fled, a broken man, as soon as he saw his savage ally begging mercy, as he thought, from the king. We couldn't let him starve, but I hunted him up, and made it plain to him that he was done with plots and schemes permanently. He entered Killanore Abbey, where my dear old friend Brother Teague became abbot, ultimately, and de Morreise got so pious before he died there that you would never know he'd been such an object in the past.

I was confirmed by the king in my fief at Pigsty, and I raised a castle there. The Mac Cloghan remained my friend; I promised him that I would be steward of my own Irish lands, and I've kept that promise, for I spend every autumn there, save this last one. I also was castellan of Dun Cathach until young St. Erne was able to take over a few years ago. My uncle gave it up and died, a year after my marriage, and I became baron of Pen Mynydd here in my own Wales—and with my wife's estate, I have a handful to manage; although Eadmer still thinks he's the one who does the managing. You should see him; he's grown him a stomach like an alderman's, and has acquired a wife and a large family, estates of his own and a gold chain; you'd never think he wandered over Ireland in nothing but a coat of dirt and a couple of sheepskins. Like myself, he prefers Wales; but the Geraldines are growing more Irish than the Irish, as time goes on. We still have troubles with the tribesmen, but our stout castles are all over the place now, and we have some means of controlling them.

The Mac Breagh tribe had been so broken up by our raid and the loss of their chief that they have been pretty easy to handle lately. Their present chief is a well-mannered young man, but I never turn my back on him. If a man can't learn from the past, he's pretty hopeless.

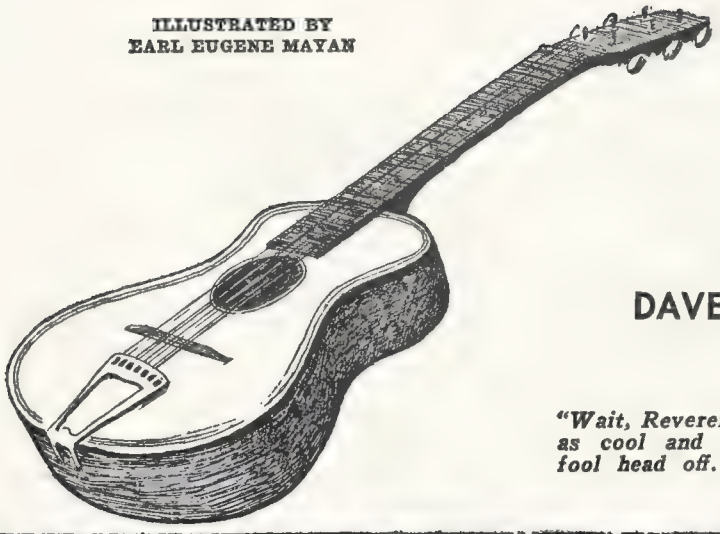
Well, as I say, I was wandering by the river today, still deep in my memories of the past. It did not seem strange to me when a little girl lifted her curly tow-head out of the river-reeds and smiled toothlessly at me, just as she had long ago on the tourney-field near Winchester; and the two boys discussing some sort of devilment by the willows were the boys who had once been squires to the Earl of Salisbury—the fair head and the dark. It was as if I could reach out and touch the past again.

And then I heard a voice singing an old Welsh cattle-croon, and a lady in a gown the color of willow-leaves came walking toward me through the water-meadow, a great cluster of violets in her two hands, and her long amber hair ruffled out of its braids by the wind.

My heart filled. I called to her, and she looked up and saw me, and came running to me, light-footed and beautiful—my lady, my chief steward, my surgeon, the mother of my sons Edmund and Milo, and of my small daughter Angharad—the same girl whom I had saved from the wreck on the Teeth of Leir, and lost to the Mac Breagh—who had puzzled and tormented me, and saved my life, and brought my wits back to me again, and made the life she had saved worth living again. Not a day older than she looked that afternoon in the woods by Waterford, and the same expression of radiant joy upon her face as she gazed at me—as I gathered her into my arms. And the past and the present came together in our kiss.

HERE ENDETH BRIAN FITZ-BRIAN,
HIS NARRATIVE.

ILLUSTRATED BY
EARL EUGENE MAYAN



By
DAVE GRUBB

"Wait, Reverend!" says Red, just as cool and just a-playing his fool head off. "Listen to this!"

THE CINCINNATI GITTAR

IF RED COY knows what's good for him he won't never come back to town. Leastways if he does he better not let Arkie Price get within gunshot range of him. Arkie may be a glory-shouting holiness preacher but he's got a temper like Satan himself, especially when it comes round to the subject of Red Coy and Arkie's pretty daughter Sade.

It all started the summer Red Coy quit school and got himself a job on the State Road. Red's folks was so poor they didn't have enough food in the house to fill his lunch pail that morning but Red was a spunky kid and he lived off raspberries he picked along the ditch till he drew his first week's pay. Two months of slinging a shovel though and Red was itching for bigger things, so he sent away to a mail-order house for a five-string Cincinnati gittar. Now there's some that praises Hawaiian gittars and some won't have nothing but one of them

steel gittars that you plug in the light socket but for my dough there ain't nothing like a Cincinnati gittar. That there one of Red Coy's was the only one of its kind I ever seen and Lord it made every other breed of gittar look sick.

Well, it didn't seem like Red had hardly got that gittar out of the mailman's hands till he could make it sit up and sing sassier than a monkey on a stick. There was a little book of gittar lessons come along with it but Red flung that out the window as soon as he got her unwrapped. It just seemed like Red knowed how to make that gittar do tricks before he ever laid hands on her. And there wasn't no trick in the world that gittar couldn't do. Sometimes she'd just naturally cry like a baby and first thing you know she'd set up and bark like a puppy dog and then before you could sneeze she'd be sobbing all low-down and mournful, like a pretty girl that's been left behind. Sometimes she'd whine like a mouth harp and then two shakes later she'd be thumping like a bull-fiddle. Arkie Price always told it around town that the derned thing was bewitched and I reckon poor Arkie was one man that ought to know.

WELL, it was the next spring that Red set his heart on Arkie's daughter Sade. Sade was one of the prettiest little girls in West Virginia with that shiny gold hair of hers hanging down her back so long she could stand on it with her heels. And she had the sweetest little angel face in the world with little teeth as even and sweet as white grains of young corn. She wasn't very big, didn't hardly come up to Red Coy's shoulder, but then Red was a pretty big boy—lean as cordwood and good-looking as they come. Red caught sight of her the first time at a social they was throwing at Arkie's church. It's hard to say how Red happened in that night; he wasn't much of a church-goer. But anyhow first thing you know there they both was, flirting all over the place and eating sandwiches out of each other's box lunches.

"Where you live at?" says Red directly.

"Oh, in a little old house built out of doors," says Sade, real sassy-like.

Well, it didn't take Red long to see that this here was a girl that not only had beauty but wits as well. She'd tease Red till he nigh went crazy and poke fun at him till he'd blush like a beet. But when the social was over that night he made her promise to let him come calling on her the very next night. At last she blushed and said yes.

Well, it wasn't hard for the people to see how a pair like that really belonged to each other from the very first time their eyes tangled. Everybody in town thought so, except Sade's old man, Arkie. Arkie was one of them little, scrawny dark-skinned fellows that could shout sin out of the Devil himself. That's why he'd been such a popular preacher at the church all them years. But he was hard on Sade; didn't think any man was good enough for his daughter; kept her penned up at home most of the time and wouldn't let her go dance in beer-joints nor go to shows nor nothing like the other girls did. Sade was so high-spirited though that she'd run off when she could. And it was a marvel to some people that she didn't run off from home for good.

The night Red called, Arkie was off to prayer meeting. Him and Sade sat together on the porch, swinging and eating pop-corn from a big paper poke. Directly Red hitches up that Cincinnati gittar of his and starts playing two or three choruses of "The Dying Brakeman." Well if Sade thought she was in love before, it sure wasn't nothing to the way she felt about Red after she'd heard him play that gittar of his. And Red wasn't no better off himself after the first time he'd kissed them soft red lips of little Sade's.

When old Arkie got wind that Sade was sneaking off and seeing Red, though, he liked to blowed up. He hauled off next Sunday and preached a hell-fire sermon about low-down trash that can't find no better way to pass the time than get drunk and sing sinful songs on a gittar and lure young girls to their doom. Folks claimed he give Sade a pretty stout whipping for seeing Red and whenever he went off preaching after that he kept her beside him every minute of the time.

Poor Red was pretty bad broke up about it and the first thing his folks knowed he'd packed up his duds and grabbed his Cincinnati gittar and hopped him a rattler for the south. Well, he didn't show up again around home for nearly a year and I guess the only thing that held Sade together and kept her from running off for good was the faith that Red would come back and get her. When Red did come home he was wilder and tougher than ever and the kind of gittar music he could play now made the old kind sound sadder than a pair of cats loving on a fence. Red just naturally had that old Cincinnati gittar trained till she could talk. There wasn't nothing she couldn't do.

THE night he come back to town he come walking into "My Sister's Place," a little beer-joint under the Glen Elk bridge, and come over and told me where all he'd been at. He sure looked good—had on one of them fancy broad-leather belts with colored glass studs set in it and a big cowboy hat. Red claimed he'd made himself a nice little pile of dough playing on the radio down in Texas but

he wouldn't deny there'd been times during the year when he didn't know where his next beer was coming from. He claimed he got washed out in a flood down in Arkansas and he floated on that Cincinnati gittar of his for twelve miles upstream. He told me how a fellow tried to swipe the gittar off him in a beer-joint in Louisville and derned if that Cincinnati gittar didn't just naturally stretch out and bite that fellow like a dog.

One night, Red said, he got throwed off a freight train in the St. Louis yards and come close to freezing to death, and though he hated to do it there wasn't nothing left but to bust up his Cincinnati gittar for kindling and build a fire. Red claimed he had the hottest little fire a man would want all night long and when morning come he poked around in the ashes and derned if he didn't find that old Cincinnati gittar just as sound as ever and not even out of tune. I reckon maybe old Arkie Price was half right when he said that Cincinnati gittar of Red's was bewitched. If anybody ought to know Arkie should.

Well, when Red Coy left "My Sister's Place" that night he just naturally walked up to Arkie Price's front door as bold as a sailor and knocked on the door, and when Arkie opened up Red said he'd come to ask for little Sade's hand in marriage. He had more money in his pants than a country lawyer and it didn't take Arkie more than one look at Red's brawny face with that white razor scar to know he wasn't dealing with no moonstruck kid anymore.

Arkie got so mad he almost lost his mind and he told Red he had Sade locked in her room and he wasn't about to give his daughter away to no low-down trash rakings that didn't do nothing but ride freight trains around the country and play sinful tunes on a gittar. And Red couldn't do much arguing back with that automatic shotgun of Arkie's shining under his nose, so he studied a minute and then went to using his wits. Sade was screaming and shouting and kicking on her bedroom door but Red never batted an eyelash.

"Sinful tunes!" cried Red, just as cool as a fall cucumber. "Why, Reverend, this here gittar don't play sinful tunes no more. They just naturally turn its stomach! I can't no more get a sinful tune out of this here gittar than you can milk a chicken. I thought you heard tell, Reverend! I thought you knowed! This here gittar won't play nothing no more but Jesus-tunes!"

Well, I declare it was right comical to see old Arkie ripping and tearing up and down his parlor waving his automatic shotgun in one hand and the Scripture in the other and trying to get up nerve to throw Red out the door. I reckon he might have tried it too, or maybe worse, when all of a sudden Red throws his Cincinnati gittar across his belt and starts beating out Jesus-tunes.

"Take that Devil's Box out of here!" hollers Arkie. "I don't aim to listen to no sinful tunes in my house!"

And with that he shoves that ugly blue automatic shotgun muzzle smackdab up against Red Coy's forehead.

"Wait, Reverend!" says Red, just as cool and just a-playing his fool head off. "Listen to this!"

Well, Arkie couldn't help but listen with his parlor just a-rocking and a-busting wide open with that fine gittar music, and old Red Coy standing there in the doorway, planted like a tree. And he can't hardly believe his ears when he hears old Red Coy singing Jesus-tunes with that Cincinnati gittar of his just thundering out Glory like a pipe organ. Red goes through five choruses of "Brighten Up the Corner Where You Are," and then he gives old Arkie a solid round of "In the Sweet Bye and Bye" to work on, and the first thing you know the old man is just naturally unsettled.

"Lord, boy," Arkie says, putting his shotgun on the davenport. "I can't deny that sure is fine gittar playing!"

"Why sure!" says Red, the sweat-drops rolling off his face. "This here ain't no ordinary gittar. This here is one of them gen-u-ine mail-order Cincinnati gittars."

"Me oh my!" says Arkie, listening with all his might. "A man sure could save himself a mess of souls at a meeting with a gittar like that. Why—a man might even be able to hook himself a Methodist or two!"

"You ain't heard nothin' yet, Reverend," cries Red, really warming up to it and lighting out into "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder." Well, the first thing you know, old Arkie just naturally can't keep still no more; the glory gets to itching in his toes and he starts keeping time with both feet.

"Great Day in the Morning!" hollers Arkie, his eyes as big as moons and his ears stuck out like a mule. "I sure would admire to be able to play Jesus-tunes thataway. Does a feller need many lessons?"

"Lessons!" hollers Red. "Ho ho! It don't take no lessons nohow, Reverend, to play one of these here Cincinnati gittars!"

ARKIE is so worked up by now he don't know if he's coming or going.

"Boy," he asks real confidential-like, "where could I get me one of these fine gittars?"

"Ain't no more," says Red.

"Where's the catalog you seen it in?"

"Lost it," says Red.

"Well, where's the factory where they make 'em?"

"Burned down!" says Red, just a-strumming out Jesus-tunes that'd make a hard-shell Baptist call for Grace.

"Here!" says Red all of a sudden, before the Reverend can change his mind. "Try it out yourself!"

And with that he sticks that old Cincinnati gittar right smack in Arkie's hands. Well, Arkie was so startled he almost dropped it on the rug for the gittar never even lost a beat; just kept on playing like it had never left Red's hands. That gittar was just naturally so full of music that it didn't need no one to play it nohow. And the first thing Arkie knowed, it had changed key again and was calling down the Angels with "We Will Gather at the River."

"Great Day in the Morning!" shouts Arkie. "It's a-playin' itself!"

"Why sure!" says Red Coy. "Reverend, that there Cincinnati gittar is just naturally educated!"

"Me oh my!" says Arkie, his eyes just a-poppin' out of his head. "A man with a gittar like this here could sure save himself a church-full of souls!"

"He sure could," says Red, with a twinkle in his eye. "And a man that could save that many souls would make hisself a nice heap of dimes in the collection plate!"

"He sure could!" says Arkie, thinking out loud. Then he flashes Red a black look with them shiny eyes of his.

"What you a-hintin' at, boy!" he snaps.

"Why just this, Reverend," says Red. "I figured maybe you and me might manipulate a swap."

"Swap!" says Arkie, his eyes narrowing to little slits of thinking.

"Sure," says Red. "I'll swap you my Cincinnati gittar for your daughter Sade!"

Well, Red knowed he'd either get Sade right that minute or else he'd end up in the highway with a load of buckshot in his pants, but Red Coy was a man for long chances.

"Hmm," says Arkie and his eyes gleamed in the lamplight like a treed possum's. "That might be done, boy, that might be done. Of course—it'd have to be mighty confidential. If word got round I'd swapped my own flesh and blood daughter for a mail-order gittar—there might be some folks as wouldn't understand."

"Don't worry," says Red. "I won't never say nothin'."

"Then it's a deal!" snaps Arkie and gives Red the key to little Sade's room.

Well, the word got around next day that a big revival was called at the church and it was one big night, I'll tell you. Everybody was all dressed up and smelling good and showing off their fancy best. There wasn't room to scratch your chin and the floor boards was near to caving in. Everybody got all set on the benches and them that couldn't sit stood against the walls and it looked like there'd be right smart of souls saved that night. Arkie come strutting in all dressed up in his best black preaching suit and his white boiled shirt and his shoestring necktie and the Cincinnati gittar under his arm.

"Brothers and sisters!" he shouts when he gets all set on the preaching platform. "I'm done with talkin'! It's time I rolled up my sleeves and got a few of you black-hearted sinners to really bust down and give in. Talkin' won't do it! No! No! I've tried that! So now I'm a-goin' to try and give you one last chance to catch yourself on the brink of the Pit! I mean with music!"

And with that he give a little strum on the Cincinnati gittar just to get it going. Well, it just seemed like the spirit got to working and jumping and twisting on the strings of that gittar and such music come out as was never heard before. Arkie tried to get it stopped but it wasn't no use. You might just as well try and stop a whirlwind as try and stop a Cincinnati gittar once it gets going. That contrary gittar had just made up its mind to play sinful tunes that night and there wasn't no stopping it. It went through five low-down, mean, ornery choruses of "Pistol Packin' Mama" and then really blowed the roof off with "It Makes No Never Mind." The people couldn't tell if Arkie was playing the gittar or if the gittar was playing Arkie. Arkie was jumping all over the place like he was walking barefoot through the coals of Hell; wondering whether to fling himself out the window or crawl down through the floor cracks and live with the bugs for a few years till things cooled down. For it just seemed like he couldn't leave loose of that Cincinnati gittar to save his life.

Well, the whole place was in an uproar for sure, and before they could get Arkie out of doors that old gittar had busted loose on the first verse of "Frankie and Albert"—which is a mighty sinful tune, at least for church meetings. All the mothers was a-hustling their daughters off home and the men was putting their heads together to decide who the next preacher was going to be.

Which is why I say Red Coy shouldn't show himself within gunshot range of Arkie Price if he knows what's good for him. Red and Sade's married now, raising three kids, and Red's got him a good steady job at the sawmill and bought himself a nice little place back up Prospect Valley. Sometimes when you're passing of an evening you'll see them sitting together on the porch and most always you'll hear the music of the Cincinnati gittar. Some folks claim Red sent away to the mail-order house and got himself another one. But I know better.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

"Can he fight! He's the red-roarin'est, peelhailin'est, scrappin'est, maddest, fastest, fightin'est thing what ever grew feathers. He can lick his weight and that of a coop full of hens an' houn' dogs an' wildcats—an' mebbe even a couple of Spanish tossed in!" Meet—

"COCK O' THE RIVER"

By JIM KJELGAARD

—and bill your bird at the pitmaster's signal against Cap Gitchie's four-pounds-nine-ounces of hell on spurs that ruled Old Mrs. Sippi's roost from Louisville to Natchez in the days when a keelboatman's only diversion, apart from shootin' Injuns and renegate whites, was bettin' on cock-fights. A glorious new novelette of hack and main by the man who gave us "Breed of the Blue Hen" only a few months ago.

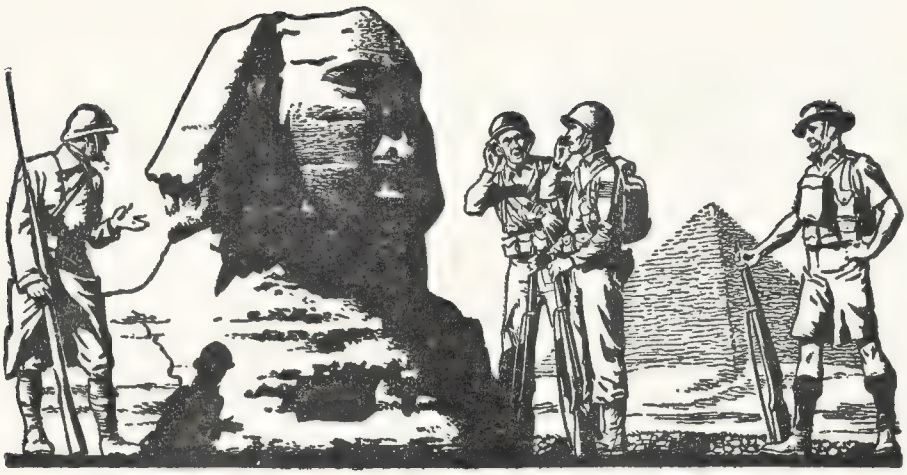
And "A Blade of Green" by T. C. McClary takes us to Fort Bayard on the Gila Trail at the heels of Lieutenant Linklater, that model of a military martinet, to witness his one man assault on a forgotten cavalry post in Indian country where discipline was as minus a quantity among the troops as self-respect was in the officers—or green grass on the parade ground.

"Promised Land" by Giles A. Lutz—a newcomer to our Writers' Brigade roster—is the most unusual horse-racing story we've read in many a moon. . . . And "Mutiny on the Monte" by Harry Bedwell packs a million iron-horse-power potential for laughter. It's as uproarious a railroading yarn as you're apt to encounter in as many miles of highballing—drawing-room or crummy.

Plus

Plus additional fine short stories by William Brandon, John Scott Douglas, R. W. Daly, Fred Gipson and others. . . . An interesting article by Curtis Bishop about the world's largest ranch (and don't try to tell us it's in Texas!). . . . The stirring conclusion of R. G. Emery's "Home Is the Warrior" . . . . And the usual assortment of informative features and departments you can expect to find each month only in—

ON SALE OCTOBER 11th



ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

UNLESS you've five years to waste—don't join the Foreign Legion!

Query: At the present time I am in the U. S. Marines and will complete four years in February '48. I intend to make some service a career and would like to know what the qualifications are for enlistment in the French Foreign Legion. What are the age requirements? The length of service required? Does one lose American citizenship if he enters this service?

—Pfc Ken A. Wilson,
Marine Detachment,
Boca Chica Field,
Key West, Fla.

Reply by Georges Surdez: In peace time, the French Foreign Legion accepts men between 18 and 45, and the enlistment is for five years. The physical requirements are not as rigid as those of the American services. I do not believe that in ordinary times one loses American citizenship by entering the Legion, as the man who enlists is not asked to swear an oath of allegiance but simply signs a contract. For some years before the recent war, the Legion had stopped accepting citizens of the United States of America, a ruling caused by the publicity given some cases, such as Doty's, who wrote "The Legion of the Damned"—which, by the way, was an honest and fair book. As the Foreign Legion accepts any name and any nationality offered by applicant, that is no problem even if the ruling hasn't been forgotten. But American consular agents will not intervene in any way for a citizen who has enlisted in the Legion, for very obvious reasons.

You do not ask for any advice, but here goes just the same: Do not enlist in the Foreign Legion. My old friends in the Legion would approve of my writing this. They often told me: We don't want men who will be discontented, who have anything to regret, a good life to return to. Once a man has enlisted, we naturally have to make him stick, after paying an enlistment bonus, feeding and training him.

Very few Americans are satisfied in the Legion in normal times. The food, while nourishing and O.K. for most Europeans, is unfamiliar and monotonous. Then there are the very long and boring stretches of garrison duty, and very little is done to provide recreation. A Legionnaire whose home country is in a chaotic condition can find satisfaction, security, even pleasure in the Legion. But a man from America is likely to grow pretty restless at times during five years. The actual pay of Legionnaires seems high on paper, but translated into dollars is still very small. If you wish to make some service a career, as you say, make it some American service. You'll serve fewer years and receive a higher pension, and your service will count for civilian positions. These days, you will see as much of the world as a Marine as you would as a Legionnaire, and under American conditions. If you have a yen for travel in general, the Merchant Marine would be better from every point of view. The Legion is picturesque, sure, but remember that anyone who writes about it, including myself, picks out the highlights—so, unless you've no fear of wasting five years, don't go into it.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, financial backing or employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

Notice: Many of our *Ask Adventure* experts are still engaged in government service of one kind or another. Some are on active duty in the Army or Navy, others serving in an executive or advisory capacity on various of the boards and offices which were set up to hasten the nation's war effort. Almost without exception these men consented to remain on our staff, carry on their work for the magazine if humanly possible, but with the understanding that for the duration such work was to be of secondary importance to their official duties. This was as it should be, and when you didn't receive answers to queries as promptly as we all wished, your patience was appreciated. Foreign mails are still slow and uncertain, many are still curtailed drastically, but now that the war is over we can hope for a more expanded, smoother functioning *Ask Adventure* service very soon. Bear with us and we'll continue to try to serve you as speedily as possible.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Boxing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—FREEMAN LLOYD, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure.*

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *Fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

Fly and Bait Casting Tournament—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Health-Building Activities, Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Horses and Horsemanship—JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, 8225 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 8, Wis.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, care of *Adventure.*

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6520 Romaine St., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *Foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns, American and Foreign: Wing Shooting and Field Trials—ROY S. TINNEY, Chatham, New Jersey.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11831 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Swords, Spears, Pole Arms and Armor—MAJOR R. E. GARDNER, care of *Adventure.*

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America. Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *Birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 5 Minerva Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, care of *Adventure.*

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Sunken Treasure: *Treasure ships; deep-sea diving; salvage operations and equipment*—LIEUTENANT HARRY E. RIESEBERG, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 14 N. Burnett St., East Orange, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

Military Aviation—O. B. MYERS, care of *Adventure.*

Federal Investigation Activities—*Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—*It's history, duties and tradition*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask.

The French Foreign Legion—GEORGES SURDEZ, care of *Adventure.*

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure.*

★New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley N. S. W., Australia.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya—GORDON MACCREAGH, care of *Adventure.* **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits, Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDEL, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Europe, Part 1 ★*The British Isles*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W.C. 2, England. **2** *Denmark, Germany, Scandinavia*—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure.*

Central America—ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure.*

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure.*

★West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Iceland—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure.*

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure.*

Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, care of *Adventure.*

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Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6520 Romaine St., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure.* **3** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 720 W. New York Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **5** *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **6** *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, Holbrook Tribune-News, Holbrook, Arizona. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 2 *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River*—GEO. A. ZERR, 31 Cannon St., Pittsburgh, 5, Penna. **3** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis. Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 716, Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **5** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C.; S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.* **6** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

(Continued from page 8)

away from a daylight bank job. My family had moved to Chicago by then and I had some personal opinions about the kind of characters who were running the town. The incident got under my skin and I tried dramatizing it in short story form, just to kill time.

Having it done, I sent it in to a short story contest which Paul Palmer was running in the old New York *World*. I guess the story was strong enough to hold up under any kind of writing or treatment. Anyway, I won the gold.

It was printed under a plain by-line but some indignant old-timer ferreted out the facts and wrote a complaining letter to the Commandant of Cadets. I found myself on the carpet at once, attempting to explain. It seemed the piece could be . . . and was . . . considered highly pacifistic. I managed to convince the Com that I was no pacifist and nothing serious came of it, beyond the then unsuspected welt left by the writing bug. (It took nearly twenty years and most of my right leg to teach me that the Commandant was right all the time.)

My next try came after graduation. The late and, at that time, famous Christian 'Red' Cagle was a classmate and comrade-in-crime of mine. Someone in the publishing business asked Red: Why not some football reminiscences? As usual in such cases, Red looked about for somebody to take care of the minor detail of the actual writing. We bought a room in the Astor, laid in a few fifths of Walker, Red took over the bed and I a rented typewriter, and we opened the factory.

Every single one of the things 'we' did sold; one even to that well-known gold-mine down in Philadelphia. I decided, 'Migod, why has no one ever *told* me. . . . !' You know how that goes.

I worked for almost the next ten years without making cigarette money . . . and I'm no heavy smoker. Harder and harder, as slip piled on rejection slip. Anybody who thinks that writing is an easy way to chase the wolf . . . well, if he can *prove* it, he's a better man than any writer I know.

* * * *

I'm afraid 'Ye Ed' didn't know what was in store for him when he reminded me of that promise. But I think there's plenty of drivel above this point which could be cut, in order to let me say a word about John McQueen and the Homer homesteaders. *(Cut hell! Take all the time you want, Colonel—K. S. W.)*

To begin with, I don't know of a thing in "Home Is the Warrior" which couldn't happen. Of course, McQueen didn't have any easily visible means of support up there at Tustemena, but I assumed he had saved his flight pay. About the rest of it . . . to my mind, the shameful thing about Alaska has always been the way her best friends have exploited her. Some of those who, at the drop of a cork, will tell you how they love the country and what a fool a man must be to live anywhere else.

Yet nearly every one of them takes out everything he can get his hands on, and puts little of it back. Your average sourdough is hunting for that stake which will take him Outside for good and all. Not all of them. Not every one of the real old-timers. But it's certainly true of the average trapper, fisherman or prospector. You are told, "Well, they always come back." So what? The money is gone by the time they do. They come back to get another pile. And that which could . . . should . . . go into building up the place has been dribbled away in the States.

Your businessman and his employees in the towns work eight or nine months a year to lay up enough to pay for the annual trip Outside. It's changing, probably even more rapidly since the end of the war, but when I went there in 1940 you could count on your fingers the houses in Anchorage which looked like homes, were treated like homes.

All Alaska needs is enough people to take her for what she is, rather than what they can get out of her. At Homer, for instance, the land is good. Some truck-farmers have grown amazing crops. The climate is equable. The toughest winter day I saw in Anchorage, with the same general climatic conditions, was sixteen below. From twenty above to four or five below is usual during the winter. There's the best hunting in the world practically within walking distance, and fishing the like of which there's no use talking about because you wouldn't believe it. And a billion bucks' worth of scenery thrown in.

As Aasie says, "What Alaska needs is people to make *homes* there." People who think that a little isolation and a few years of outdoor privies is a small price to pay for peace and freedom, clean air, escape from the hazards of present-day highways and the never-ending struggle with the landlord.

But I hope that nobody will read anything that I, or typewriter-beaters like me, write and reach for his hat immediately. It's a rough and rugged country and you'd better know what you're up against before you take it on. But I don't think it takes a superman.

There was a lad in the bed next to me in one hospital last year—an ex-tanker with one leg left—who was hell-bent on going. I tried to talk him out of it. I thought of what he *might* run into, and I just couldn't see a one-legged man coping with it.

Nevertheless, he went. Thinking it over, I'm growing a good deal more confident about him. There won't actually be anything to be done—physically—which he can't do. It's mostly in the heart and the head. And I think that this boy will find plenty of both, when he needs it. He wants to *live* there. He won't be building a shack

just to keep the snow off his neck until his lifelong fortune piles up, and he can grab it and get out. And that has been the high road to heartbreak which too many of the get-rich-quickers followed in the old days!

DOUGLAS F. YOUNG, whose "The Colonel and 'Number One'" appears on page 85 this month, introduces himself thuswise on sitting in at *Camp-Fire* for the first time—

Born in Zion on the shores of Lake Michigan and graduated from Rutgers in 1932. There was a depression—remember?—and the best job offer that I could get (in fact the only one) was at ten dollars a week working for a credit reporting agency. It hardly seemed worth while to get up in the morning for that so I holed up for another year at Rutgers, doing some graduate study and barely eking out an existence by working as a graduate assistant in the Economics Department and waiting on table at the fraternity house. In 1933 I got a job in Wall Street and began going to law school at night. I passed the bar exam but before there was much time to do anything about it the draft came along.

The next five years were spent in the Infantry, most of the time in Georgia, at Fort Benning. As I had been in Europe in 1939 I hoped to get a chance to go in the other direction and for once it happened that somebody got what he wanted in the Army as I was shipped to China. Going through India in a troop train and flying the "Hump" into China were two memorable experiences.

Until the war ended we were stuck in the remote backwoods region in Yunnan Province and after that I got to Shanghai, Chungking, Canton and Peking. We hadn't been able to get anything in Yunnan so Shanghai seemed like a garden spot in spite of the inflation. In Shanghai I had my most interesting Army job as I had charge of the athletic program there and was provided everything except skiing and jai-alai. The climax was the Army-Navy game played on Dec. 1st between two picked teams. We did it in traditional style, complete with pennants, goat, mule, soda pop and drunks. About ten thousand gobs and GI's saw the classic in the Canidrome in Frenchtown and we could have admitted twice that number if there had been room—not to mention a million or so Chinese who wanted to see what the commotion was about. As it was, everyone who was connected with the game lost friends because he couldn't get tickets to pass out. Incidentally, I like the Chinese very much. They like to laugh—even though as a rule, they haven't much to laugh about these days. Working closely with Chinese troops, my observation of disciplinary measures in the Chinese Army, and several individual incidents led me to write the story in *Adventure* this month.

Since returning to the States and getting out of the Army I have been practicing law on Long Island.

AND Ted Stratton, who joins our Writers' Brigade with "Hill Smart" on page 98 this issue, avails himself of a recruit's privilege to stir the fire with the following—

A Jerseyite, first and always.

Born in Far Hills, a tiny town surrounded by estates, where more millionaires board the 8:06 morning train than you could shake a portfolio of gilt-edged bonds at. Bernardsville High, then four years at Colgate University, minoring in studies, majoring in track and football under Dick Harlow. Played with Ox DaGrossa, Rae Crowther, and the incomparable Eddie Tryon. Then into teaching, plus a year in the National Pro Football League with a speedy departure while I was still in one piece.

Married a Morristown colleen, moved to Ridgewood where I have taught English and Public Speaking, plus some football coaching, for twenty years. Five children—three girls and two boys, one in "boot camp" at Bainbridge. I became a post-depression casualty and naturally drifted into writing because I believed English teachers knew something about the business of putting one word after another. So I was a dreamer! Only stubbornness kept me seated at the Smith-Corona, but it began to pay off. Now part-time writing permits me to afford the luxury of being a school teacher.

At intervals I have directed every kind of summer camp from welfare-operated places to a swank family affair. At the latter, I obtained the material for "Hill Smart." The locale is the Ramapo Mountains behind the Rampart in southeastern New York State just over the border from Jersey. The few remaining residents are hill billies, now rapidly dying off or migrating down to the "valley." Their ancestors settled the region in 1746, helped feed the Continental garrison at Stony Point, and assisted in the creation of the millionaires' colony at Tuxedo Park.

Generally, they are a stalwart, hard-working, tough clan. Paradoxically, you can climb up any ridge on a clear day and see the skyscrapers of New York floating fairy-like above the city haze. Maybe they had something at that. No politicions, no taxes, clean air, pure spring water, freedom, independence such as the Constitution details, and the spectre of starvation every winter.

Native Delaware Indians once inhabited the region. You know this because the modern descendants, not to be confused with the sordid Jackson Whites, sport coppery skins, Roman noses, high cheekbones, and move with a stealthy bent-kneed, flat-footed gait. They have high native intelligence.

What promoted this particular story is a characteristic acquired when city civilians encroached on their domain through the Interstate Park development. Yessir, they are "hill smart," which means no stranger can outwit them. The little crossroads store is gone to make way for a lake where cityites may get close to nature. The graveyard is nearby. Tombstones blazon the names of departed Johnsons, Conklins, Pitts, Dunns—all great Americans.

"FIGHTING Docs of Dixie" is the fourth excerpt we have published from H. G. Russell's forthcoming volume on Confederate naval history. (We'll keep you posted on when you may expect to find it at your favorite bookstall). The author (He is on the faculty of Boston University.) adds the following interesting notations to the article which forms a chapter in his book—

"When I attended lectures in Philadelphia more than a half century ago, the number of the students in the two schools there (the University and the Jefferson) was a little more than a thousand, more than half of whom were from the Southern States. Of the latter the majority were bachelors of arts, or had received a classical education. The Southern States in the Slaveholding sections were, therefore, prior to the war well supplied with educated and chivalrously honorable surgeons and physicians. Such were the men who served at the bedside and in the responsible positions of the medical corps of the armies and navy of the Confederacy." Thus wrote Surgeon Samuel H. Stout long after the war in *The Southern Practitioner*, volume 24, page 437. Dr. Stout was the medical director of the general hospital for the Department of the Army of Tennessee.

The surviving officers of the medical departments of the Confederate Army and Navy organized the Association of Medical Officers of the Army and Navy of the Confederacy at the conclusion of the war. The reports of this association are rich in source materials. Even during the conflict, the professional spirit of the fighting doctors was at no low ebb; for in spite of the great demands made upon them, with the enemy storming at the very gates of their citadel, these cultured, well-trained Southern gentlemen found time to organize the Association of Army and Navy Surgeons in Richmond in August 1863, about one month after Lee's defeat at Gettysburg. The army and navy surgeons jointly published *The Confederate States Medical and Surgical Journal*. It ran from January 1864 to February 1865; for in spite of reverses hopes were still high in Dixie until near the end. Ayres & Wade of Richmond printed the journal.

After the first few months of the war, the most frequent manual used was J. Julien Chisolm's *Manual of Military Surgery* which was first published in 1861. This went into a second edition in 1862. The second edition was considerably enlarged and it contained about two times the number of topics the first edition contained. Dr. Chisolm was Professor of Surgery in the Medical College of the State of South Carolina. He writes simply and clearly. His book of about 300 pages would have fitted into the field bag of the surgeons when they were attached to the military forces or fitted into any convenient niche in the surgeon's cabin aboard ship. The book is not only informative, but entertaining as well.

I have been privileged to consult a copy used by a surgeon during a major engagement and containing the bloodstains of the wounded he treated that day. The pages are now faded and brown-spotted pages and notations they bear are those of the surgeon who used the book during the battle. That such books were used in the heat of the fight is not surprising because the younger doctors had no extensive acquaintance with that particular branch of medicine known as "military medicine." Dr. Chisolm, who read both French and German, had to go to European sources in the preparation of his manual. He consulted the works of English, Scottish, French, and German military and naval surgeons, whose treatises were published in London, Edinburgh, Paris, Hanover, and Berlin. He used fifteen references in all. His authorities wrote from 1849 until 1860, and their illustrations were chiefly drawn from the Crimean War and the Mutiny in India. In 1863 Surgeon-General Moore of the Confederate Army published in Richmond a manual under a similar title, which was supplied as a matter of routine to field and hospital surgeons. But the naval doctors, particularly those like Galt who started long cruises in 1861, stowed away a copy of Chisolm and never received the later manual. Surgeon Moore's book is more of the regulation type, but not nearly so brightly written as Chisolm's. Other medical books available to those "Fighting Docs of Dixie," though not of a specialized service character, were: Wilson's *Dissector* (1857), Druitt's *Surgery*, Bartlett's *On Fevers*, Wood's *Practice*, Watson's *Practice*, Tanner's *Practice*, Wood and Bache's *United States Dispensatory*. There were also a few copies of the more ponderous European work, Erichsen's *Surgery*.

Later in the war when it became difficult or impossible to obtain drugs, Dr. Francis P. Porcher, who was in charge of the City Hospital at Charleston and was also Professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the Charleston Medical College, prepared a manual on the indigenous drugs then used. His book was written under the direction of Surgeon-

General Moore and it was supplied to all Medical officers of both the army and navy who made application for it. It had the impressive title, *Resources of the Southern Fields and Forests, Medical, Economical, and Agricultural, being also a Medical Botany of the Southern States, with Practical Information of the Useful Properties of the Trees, Plants, and Shrubs.*

At the beginning of the war the Confederate Navy received its medical supplies from the following sources: (1) Supplies on hand in the larger cities in the South; (2) Supplies received through the blockade by means of agencies in London and Nassau; (3) Supplies brought over land from Mexico through Texas; (4) Supplies smuggled from the North by Southern belles; and (5) Captured supplies.

When most of these sources failed, resort was had to indigenous drugs of field and forest. Laboratories were established for the purpose of experimentation with these herbs in North Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi. One of the most famous of these concoctions was known as "Old Indig." It served as a substitute for quinine. It consisted of a compound tincture of willow, dogwood, and yellow-poplar bark. Other indigenous drugs commonly used at this time were decoctions and tinctures of common jimson-wood (*Stramonium*) and maypop root (*Possiflora incarnata*), given internally and locally for the relief of pain; boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*) as an antipyretic; and yellow jasmine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) used to control nervous symptoms in fever. Other indigenous remedies were queen's root (*Stillingia*) for all conditions of depraved blood; the inner bark and pith of common alder for making salves for ulcers and chronic suppurating wounds; and fresh slippery elm bark roots and leaves of the mauva plant, leaves of prickly pear or cactus, with the spines shorn, well pounded and macerated. The latter was used as an emollient poultice.

Surgical instruments were obtained through the following sources while they were available: (1) From stocks of dealers in the larger cities at the opening of the war; (2) from blockade runners; (3) those that were hand-made by Southern artisans; (4) captured stocks; (5) those brought into the service by physicians from their personal effects or private practice.

In the hospitals the attendants were, when available, one steward and one ward-master to every ten patients; a matron to every 20; a cook to every 30; and an apothecary to each physician. A saucer of chloride of lime was placed under the bed of each typhus patient for fumigations. That the medical profession was headed in the right direction is evidenced by the quotations from Chisolm: "Prevention is

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PASSED ASST SURG.				1	1															4	
ASST SURGEONS				1			1			1	1	1	2	1		1	1	1		3	
ASST SURG. FOR THE WAR				2		1							1				1				

better than cure." Again: "There is a popular dread of night air which should be exploded. The purest air we have in the cities is night air, and is the very article which is so much needed in hospitals. If the patient is properly covered in bed, there is no fear of his taking cold, or contracting other injury from the continued renewal of pure air." But the following shows the fog that enveloped the profession with reference to the germ that killed more men in the Civil War than good marksmanship: "Tetanus—This disease which does not depend upon the size of the wound from which the patient is suffering, appears to be caused frequently by sudden atmospheric changes connected with the dampness." Yet 15,000 cases of operative surgery were handled with the newly discovered chloroform administered to the patients without one death from the giving of the anesthetic!

The data in the accompanying chart was compiled from official records of the Confederate Navy. Many of the records of the Conferedate Navy were destroyed in the burning of Richmond in 1865 and a wealth of material was irretrievably lost. However, I was lucky enough to secure several of the printed and bound reports, excellent source material from which many details in my article were garnered. But there is a very necessary synthetic process involved in making the various component services of the Confederate Navy live again. One must know what to look for and work by anology until he finds it, which he usually will if he has imagined the situation accurately in the first place. The chart shows the organization of the physicians of the Confederate Navy afloat and ashore, which is the way I visualized them, and that it seems is the way they were. The form and construction of the chart is original with me. It must be remembered that the organization chart could not remain stationary any more than the accounts of a going business can. The setup I picture is the one officially reported as of January 1, 1864, when many a good ship had gone to the bottom.

APROPOS of the interchange of correspondence between Sidney Herschel Small, the creator of Koropok, and Hamilton Greene, who first brought him to life on a drawing-board—we printed it all in this department in the May issue—we thought you'd be interested in the following letter to the author from Capt. Frank A. Hurst, AUS—

My dear Mr. Small:

I am writing, seeking information. I have read every Koropok story published in *Adventure*. Now, is it possible for me to purchase these stories in book form, or better still, in volume form, i.e., several of these bound in the same copy? (*Not yet but soon, we hope to be able to announce—K. S. W.*)

I am well acquainted with the Oriental, both as a nation and as an individual. I served three years with the American Army in China, from 1925 to 1928, and for a short period of time was a Major in the old Chang Chi Sheung army.

I traveled extensively both in China and Japan, having fought professionally in Nagasaki, Tokyo, and Yokohama. While in Nagasaki I was fortunate in securing the services of an Ainu as a guide, and surprisingly, he spoke passable English. *Perhaps this could have been Davies even at that early date?* Who knows? This was short-lived, however, as I chose to take pictures of the harbor, against the constantly repeated expression "No pictures, preeze." I was told this very politely, but elected to disregard their warnings. I was immediately set upon by at least five of the bandy-legged police. Being filled with the old vim, vigor, and vitality and also with the foolhardy vanity of youth, I waded into them. My guide disappeared in the meantime. These police were armed with a "slapper," a contraption of rubber about six inches long, three and a half inches wide and about an inch thick. It had a one inch slit at one end, just big enough for the four fingers to fit through. It seemed as if each time I knocked one down at least three sprang up to take their place, even as the old mythical soldier of Jason, and I was at last brought back to my ship, the old *Thomas* transport, and thrown in the brig, there to stay until we left harbor. It is still my belief, however, that one American is as good as three Japs in actual hand to hand combat.

Still another time, while on a boxing trip to Yokohama, I dropped the British sailor, whom I fought, in the fourth round, without hardly getting my hair mussed up. Leaving the club, I passed an alley—and woke up, two days later, in the hospital—broke—my money, personal belongings, watch, passport, and visa missing. The American consulate there wired the American consulate office in Tientsin, where I was stationed at the time, and was informed that I was in fact an American soldier and could be trusted with transportation. Arrangements were made for me to catch an American transport in Nagasaki but when I arrived there the transport had already sailed and as a result I had to work my way back as an indigent American on a Jap fishing vessel. I have often been told that Tientsin was called the "City of a Thousand Smells" but in comparison Tientsin smelled like Chanel. The trip took all of three weeks and finally landed me in Chin Wan Toa, China. Arriving there I found that I still had to work my way up the coast to Tientsin, a distance

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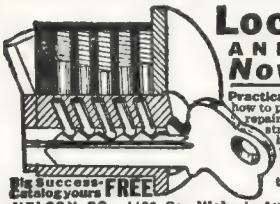

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of some eighty miles. I "deadheaded" on a 3rd class railroad train, using all possible ingenuity in evading the ticket collector.

Much water has passed under the bridge since then and I have, of course, given up boxing, put on the middle age spread, and settled down. At present I am the Exchange Officer here at Fort Crook.

May I apologize for taking up so much of your time but I am indeed serious in wishing to purchase the entire Koropok library. I wish you much luck and continued success in your next story (*see page 36*) and may you never run out of Koropok material.

Sincerely,
Frank H. Hurst,
Captain, AUS,
Fort Crook Exchange,
Fort Crook, Neb.

Hamilton Greene, you will recall, spent some time in Japan after V-J Day and wrote us whimsically that he had finally met Koropok in the flesh on the streets of Tokyo. (This some two years after he'd drawn his first portrait of the *Ainu-Americanus.*) Forwarding Captain Hurst's letter above, Author Small remarks—

> The captain must have been quite a guy. You'll note that his claim to have encountered Davies, disguised, is earlier than Greene's. Maybe we ought to offer a prize to the first man who *really* saw Koropok!

Now—seriously answering Captain Hurst's query about the possible republication, in book form, of the Koropok yarns—a great many people have expressed similar interest. We can promise that something is going to be done about it shortly!

MR. Joseph A. Wilson, of Ashland, Mass., wants to track down "a wonderful story *Adventure* published 20 or 25 years ago about Vikings. The hero's name was Pendar(?) the Great, the son of a Norse king, and one of the characters was a warrior who always traveled accompanied by white bears." It sounds wonderful to us, too, and we're on tenter-hooks till some reader with a longer memory than our own can give us the title and author.

And a Hollywood story scout claims he can't sleep till we identify for him "an exciting serial we ran somewhere around 1928 involving a schooner called *The Flying Spaniard.*"

"When you ferret out the title and author for me," he adds, "I shall have a reader in our New York office run over and skim through it to see if it's anything we can use."

Ah, the archives! . . . . Ah, the silver screen!—K.S.W.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Burch, Sgt. Joseph T., born and raised in Oklahoma, last known address 72nd A. B. Squdn., Kays Field, Columbus, Miss. Any information concerning "Joe" will be gratefully appreciated and acknowledged by his cousin, C. R. P. Marion, Box 1882, Balboa, Canal Zone.

Can anyone help me locate Tech. 5th grade Harold "Hap" Moen, formerly of Co. B. 338th Engineer G. S. Rgmt? He served in Africa and Italy from '43-'45. Lived at one time in Alaska and now lives, I believe, in Chicago, Ill. or vicinity. Please write Ernest "Shorty" Doane, 58 Childs St., Lynn, Mass.

E. Langdon, 2010 S.W. 16th Terrace, Miami, Florida, would like to contact Jim Langdon of Sault Ste. Marie, who was in St. Petersburg, Florida, in 1926.

Mrs. Lee Kay would like to hear from her brother, Tex Ranger, or anyone knowing his whereabouts. He was last heard of in Connecticut. He is 47 years old, has dark hair, plays a guitar and usually wears western clothes. Address letters to Lake Jackson, Texas.

I would like to hear from anyone knowing the whereabouts of Bill Thomas, ex-marine. He is believed to be from Pennsylvania. He served overseas and then was stationed at Unit "D" in Norfolk, Virginia until July, 1945, then at Camp Lejune, North Carolina, until September, 1945. Please get in touch with Mr. E. C. Becraft, 4512 Philpotts Road, Norfolk 2, Virginia.

Wanted, information as to whereabouts of Everett "Nemo" Ruess, age 32; height 5 ft. 7, weight 140, wears size 9 shoes, black hair worn in single lock in front, goes bareheaded. Artist-cowboy-writer he disappeared in 1934, again in 1935, from St. Petersburg, Fla. May be living with Indians in the Southwest or in Mexico. V. Summers, 805 Guerrero St., San Francisco, Cal.

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(Continued from page 95)

fleet, but it could not withstand an attack from the approaching army from the land. All that was valuable was destroyed and the fighting physicians went north to join the hard-pressed army of Lee. Here they assisted the Army medical corps in the bloody engagements that occurred near the end of the four-year conflict. When General Lee surrendered at Appomattox, the parole lists contained the names of the last of the fighting physicians. Other members of the corps had been similarly paroled at the fall of Mobile.

All returned to their homes in the South, where many remained to share the poverty and alleviate the suffering of their people who had paid the penalty of espousing a lost cause. As the South slowly recovered, an occasional voice from the late gallant Medical Corps of the Confederate Navy was heard. A Rebel surgeon, a mere youngster of twenty-four during the war, wrote from far off Texas, where he had found new opportunity. The bitterness buried, this former officer wrote his memoirs in a humorous strain, pausing in his laughter only to rejoice at the advances medicine had made since the war and to regret the absence of this knowledge at a time when it would have saved thousands of lives.

Even the gallant Galt of the far-famed *Alabama* retired to the quiet and tranquillity of a country home and practice from which he emerged only when the fair name of his beloved skipper or the memory of his once-proud ship was assailed. Such an incident occurred as late as 1886, twenty-two years after the *Alabama* had been sent to the bottom. Galt's letter of protest and indignation had all the fire of a young officer who had just left the sinking ship. At that remote date this fighting physician of the Confederacy signed his denial of the misrepresentations in a vigorous hand. The signature he affixed to his letter was: *FRANCIS L. GALT, Surgeon of C. S. Steamer Alabama.*

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